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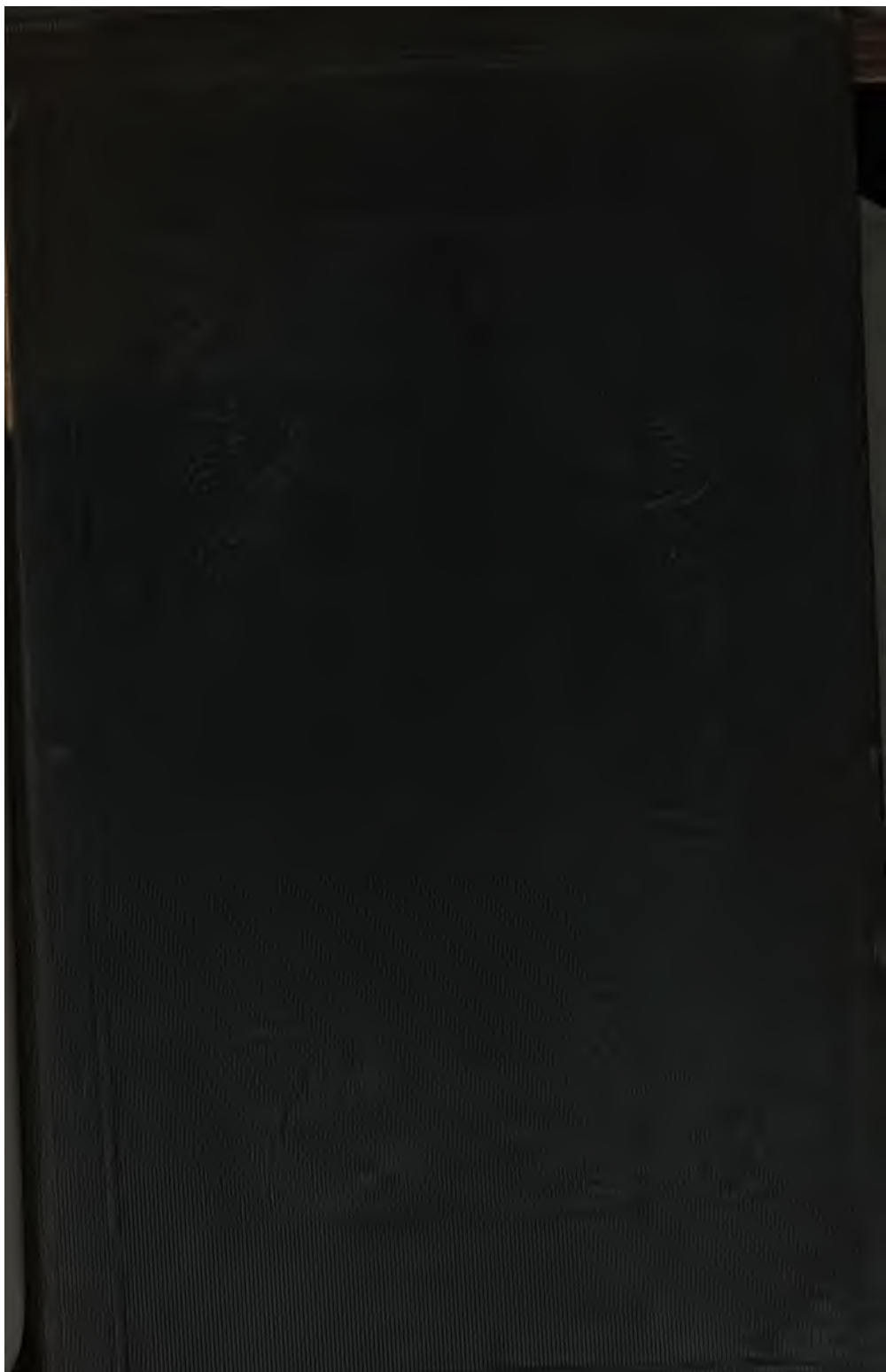
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THE
HALL AND THE HAMLET;
OR,
SCENES AND CHARACTERS
OF
COUNTRY LIFE.

BY
WILLIAM HOWITT,

AUTHOR OF
"THE BOOK OF THE SEASONS," "RURAL LIFE IN ENGLAND," &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE HALL
AND
THE HAMLET.

VOL. II.

B

S C E N E
IN THE
PEAK OF DERBYSHIRE.

VISIT TO MRS. BECKETT.

THERE are some places in the country so profoundly stagnant and eventless, that the slightest passing occurrence becomes a matter of vast concern, and is chronicled for ever. Such a scene I was witness to, or rather occasioned, a few summers ago in the Peak of Derbyshire.

On a fine summer's day I had walked across that wild district from the river Dove, on the edge of Staffordshire, on my way to Bakewell. About three o'clock in the afternoon I descended a hill towards the village of Stanstil. The day was hot, the country was open and bare, and the

roads, all of limestone, were dazzlingly white to the eye, and flung back the heat to me with burning effect. For many miles I had not found any shade to flee to. Long ridges of grey rocks, which reared themselves above the greenness of the sward, seemed to burn and glow in the sun, rather than to offer any pleasant shadow. I was both weary and consumed with thirst, for I had set out at six o'clock in the morning, and thus had been nine hours on foot. It was, therefore, with a sincere joy that I saw lying below me the village I have alluded to. I met a man ascending with his team, and asked him whether I could find a public-house where I could get some refreshment.

"Oh, yay, to be sure—down there, at th' big house at th' corner—Mester Timms's; an th' bettermest sorte o' folks goen theer!"

As I descended through the village, which was like most peak villages, of two scattered rows of heavy stone cottages, with flag-stone roofs, without trees about them, I arrived where two old men were leaning on a low garden-wall, one in the garden, the other in the road, and to them I repeated my inquiry. The answer was the same.

"To be sure—at Mester Timms's there, at th' big house at th' corner—yo can see it."

I saw a big house at the corner certainly, and thanking them, marched on. There, at the door of "th' big house," I found a spring-cart standing, with a little boy sitting in it, looking very ill, as if he were at the point of being taken to the doctor; and just as I reached the house-door out came a portly country dame, in a handsome black silk gown and mantilla, bonneted, as if about to take a trip.

As this appeared to be the landlady, and the mother of the invalid boy, I said, "So you are just going out?"

"Yes."

"And I," added I, "am just going *into* your house to take some refreshment."

The portly dame instantly turned round again, entered the house before me, opened a room-door, and ushered me into a little parlour, carpeted with a sheet of lead. The fact was so singular that, having never, neither before nor since, seen such a carpet, I could not help noticing it. The good woman turned suddenly to me and said,

"And who may yer bey, pray sir?"

"Who may I be?" replied I, in astonishment at the question from a landlady to a stranger; "why myself to be sure, and that I have been

many years ; and that's what many people can't say."

" No, be-leddy, that can't they."

" But," said I, " you seem curious to know who people are that come hither. Do you ask everybody that comes to your house who they are? I suppose you don't see many strangers?"

" Middling," said she shortly, as if rather nettled at the observation, adding, " An yo're somebody when yor a-whom, I reckon."

" No doubt of it," I replied smiling ; " but don't let me detain you. I see you are going out, and your servant can do just as well for me."

The tall and stately woman withdrew briskly, and without another word. I saw her speaking to the maid, and out she went, mounted her spring-cart, and drove off.

The servant-maid came into the little parlour, where I had comfortably seated myself on a sofa, still contemplating the leaden carpet, which, as it is a country of lead mines, was probably considered not only a very enduring, but a very cheap one at first cost, and well adapted, in hot weather, for this purpose, from its coolness. She set me one of those small round deal three-legged tables, that you always find in public-

houses, spread me a very white cloth, set on it bread and cheese, and was in the act of taking down from a cupboard a jug to fetch some ale, when I said to her,

“Your mistress seems a very curious sort of body; she likes to know who everybody is that comes to the house.”

“Why they thought, perhaps, as yo towk this for a public-house.”

“To be sure I did! I was told it was.”

“No, sir, it’s a farm-house.”

“A farm-house! But it’s a public-house too? I asked twice in the village, and both times I was told that the big house at the corner, Mr. Timms’s, was the public-house.”

“Oh!” said the girl, “that’s *round* the corner. Yo couldn’t sey *that*—it’s corner as they meant that you could sey!”

It may be imagined that my mistake, and my conduct to Mrs. Beckett, the mistress of the house, now flashed very strangely over me. I could not help bursting into a hearty fit of laughter.

“Why,” said I, “I did not think I had been such a fool. I have heard of people making such mistakes—of walking into private houses, in the notion that they were inns; but I could not have believed myself capable of such a thing.

But you've a sign over the door? What's that for?"

"No, sir, we've no sign."

We went out and looked, there was no sign at all!

"But what did the men mean by saying 'the big house at the corner—I could see it?' Do they think I can see through a brick wall?"

"Ah, it's round the corner!" cried the girl; "that's what they meant—they know where the house is well enough."

"Well," said I, "your mistress might well wonder what she had got. I thought her very funny; but she must have thought me very impertinent indeed."

"Oh!" said the girl, "they thought it was, may-happen, summody as knowed th' mester."

"No, I don't know th' mester!"

The girl was moving off with her jug for the ale, laughing in contagion at my laughter, which broke out more and more irresistibly, as I called to mind the whole scene.

"Stop! stop!" I shouted, "you need not go for the ale. I am not going to take your house by storm, and eat and drink with you into the bargain."

"O yes; missis said if you fun it out, she hoped you'd take summat au the same."

"No, no, by no means; I would not do that on any account. Tell your mistress that it was a mistake, and how it occurred—and that I ask her a thousand pardons."

With this I withdrew, and walking round the corner, there saw with its sign, all fair and clear, and no mistake, the public-house. I entered a low, old-fashioned room, with sanded floor. On a bench by the wall, opposite to the door, sate a man and woman, evidently the master and mistress, shelling peas. There was a tall, wooden screen by the door, which kept off the draught from the space about the fire-place. I seated myself within this screen, by the window, and opposite to the master and mistress. I had soon some oaten cake, the usual bread of the country, cheese, and London *poter*, as the man called it, before me. While I was refreshing myself, I could not help running again over my odd mistake, and laughing repeatedly half-aloud at it.

"Yo seemen merry, sir," said the landlord, going on quietly shelling the peas.

"Yes," said I, "I have done such a foolish thing as I could not have believed possible."

I then related to him and his wife exactly what had passed. As I went on they made no comment, but cast successively quiet, but significant glances at each other, and the moment I had

ended, up rose the man without a word, leaving the woman smiling to herself and shelling the peas, but without any observation. The man went into an adjoining room, and there I heard him begin to relate the matter to somebody, *verbatim et literatim*. What the gentleman had said, and what Mrs. Beckett had said. There never was a more perfect fac-simile of a relation made.

"News must, indeed, be scarce here," thought I to myself; but I had not time to think further, for out came the landlord, followed by a tall farmer with a newspaper in his hand, whom he had thus been edifying.

"I've been telling Mister Mickleham," said the landlord, "about yor goeing into Mr. Beckett's, and heyd be much obliged if yo'd tell it him again."

"With all my heart," said I. The farmer seated himself in a chair near the man and his wife, and I repeated what I have here related. I could see a secret play of the richest entertainment in the farmer's ample, rosy, and comely face, as I went on. He cast now and then a glance at the landlord and his wife, and they smiled and worked away faster than ever. As I concluded, the farmer struck his hand upon his knee, and exclaimed,—

"That's the finest thing as ever happened in au this country ; that's the proudest woman in au these parts! Oh, the dickens! to think of her house being taken for a public-house! Oh, its eggs and milk! It's worth ony thing! It'll be wormwood to her!"

The farmer, who seemed to be put in the best possible humour by this event, now entered into further conversation, and I soon learned that he was a very influential man; head, in fact, of his parish. He had given the ground, and been the main raiser of a Methodist chapel there. He had resisted the introduction of the New Poor Law. Had refused to comply with the requisition of the commissioners, and shewn to his fellow-parishioners, who were ready to obey, that they were under no obligation to do so, as the parish was under Gilbert's Act, and had thus triumphed.

Having refreshed myself, I desired to know what I had to pay, that I might now proceed, but the farmer said,

"I've just one favour to beg, sir."

"What is that?"

"Why, that you'll go and take tea wi' me. I live just above here, and it's just now my tea-time."

I would have excused myself, as I had just

made such a hearty refreshment, and besides, wanted to stop on my way to Bakewell, and survey the singular Druidical scenery on Stanton Moor; but he begged most earnestly that I would oblige him, that he had set his mind on it, and that if I did not go with him he should feel quite hurt. To clench the matter, the landlord stepped across the room and whispered, "Dow goo, sir, for he's a very good sort o' gentleman, and's worth threy hundred a-year."

"Oh!" said I, again in a whisper, "certainly, that settles the matter—of course I will go."

Leaving the landlord, therefore, to the pleasing persuasion that he had put an utter extinguisher on my reluctance to comply with Mr. Mickleham's most hospitable invitation by the overwhelming intelligence of the good man's wealth, I followed the worthy farmer, and in five minutes was ascending to his house, on the hill above the village. It had an ample garden round it, and possessed a really beautiful site, overlooking a great range of fine country. In the foreground, the singular pile of rocks called "Mockbeggar's Hall," or "Robin Hood's Stride;" the rocks and Druidical stones of Stanton Moor; the woods beyond, and a splendid intermingling of woods and hills near Haddon and Bakewell, to the High Peak Moors.

In the entrance hall I was struck with admiration at a fine old carved oak cabinet, that had evidently been brought from the old house of his ancestors, which, probably, he had quitted to build this, or had been the first of his family to quit for many a century. He said he had been tempted by a man from London to sell the fellow to it, that he never had repented but once, and that was ever since, and that he would not part with this for any money.

In his ample and agreeable sitting-room we found his two daughters, who were just come from boarding-school at Ashbourne; two very pretty and amiable girls they seemed, and as he had told me that he was a widower, I could not help congratulating him on having such pleasant home companions.

"Now, Nancy, my dear," said he to one of them, "I've brought a gentleman to take a cup of tea with us—let us have it quickly; and Jane, my dear, see if the kettle has boiled, and bring it in."

Tea was speedily on the table, and we were engaged over it.

"Now," said the father, "I've just one favour to beg of this gentleman, and that is, that he'll tell you what he has just told me."

"With all my heart," said I, and again I re-

lated my unlucky adventure with Mrs. Beckett. The story was indescribably entertaining to the young ladies ; they laughed till the tears were in their eyes, and their delighted father exclaimed, again striking his knee,

“ That is famous ! famous ! There wants only one thing more to complete my happiness.”

“ What is that ?” asked his daughters both together.

“ That Mrs. Beckett had but been at home, that I could have asked her to tea, too. Oh, what laughing we should have had ! for, with all her pride, there is not a better-hearted soul in all the parish than Mrs. Beckett.”

The subject was talked over and laughed over in all imaginable ways ; what would the great Mrs. Beckett say at her house having been mistaken for a tavern ? She would never hear the last of it ! Much was the wonder expressed, too, as to who the two old men leaning over the garden wall could have been, who led me into the error. There was a relish and a luxury in dwelling on every minute portion of this simple occurrence, that can only be felt or conceived by people in some quiet, uneventful life. As I rose to depart, Mr. Mickleham said,

“ I’ve just one more favour to ask.”

“ What is that ?”

"Why, that you'll give us your name, that when we talk this affair over, as we often shall, we may know who the gentleman was."

I handed him my card. After looking at it, "Howitt, Howitt," said he, "I've seen that name before. Hav'n't I seen it in print?"

"That's very likely," I added.

With this he went to a bookcase, brought out Glover's History of Derbyshire, opened it at a place where there was a short biographical account of myself and Mrs. Howitt :

"Is that your name?"

"Yes."

"And that your wife's?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" said he, turning down the corners of several leaves at the place, and nodding significantly, as if to say, 'That's capital! that's much better than ever! *Now* Mrs. Beckett *will* be finely off when she knows who it was that took her house for a public-house, and that she took up so sharply, and got so sharply took up again by. Oh, that's excellent!'

With that he clapped to the bookcase-door, and taking leave of his two smiling and pretty daughters, I went out, followed by him, who then led the way to the foot-road to the moors; where, bidding me a hearty good-bye, and giving

me as hearty an invitation if ever I came again into that country, he returned, and I saw him hurrying down to the village, no doubt to see if Mrs. Beckett were yet come back, that he might have his laugh with her, or to explore who the old men were at the garden wall. It must be Thomas this, and John that, he and his daughters had said. In short, there was talk, and merriment, and wonder for a month for the whole village in this little circumstance. Nay, I doubt not but that it is still talked of, and will remain a stock anecdote for the present generation.

“LET YOUR HOUSE AND GO ABROAD.”

How many thousands of families, living comfortably on some sweet spot of English ground, have had that sentence rung in their ears by their friends returned from the delights of foreign sojourn ! “ Why don’t you see something of the world ? What is there to prevent your living in France, Italy, or Germany, a few years, just as well as here ? You have no business, no particular tie to bind you to England ; nothing but what may be done just as well at a distance or by post ; and here are your children getting to the educating age. Let your house and go abroad. There, you will fill your minds with all sorts of new ideas ; you will live a new life, amongst all sorts of new people, things, and habits. You may see whatever is most wonder-

ful and impressive in nature and in art. The Alps, the great ruins, the great cities of Europe, all are open to you. Rome, Paris, Naples, Vienna, all invite you to explore their treasures of art, their monuments of history, the life and pleasures of their society. The most beautiful vallies await your charmed eyes, the finest old forests lie expectant of your tread. The vineyards of the Rhine, the olive-gardens of Italy, the plains and mountains where great men have lived, and great deeds have been done,—will you not for once behold them? Will you not contemplate the miracles of ancient art in Rome and Florence, of modern art in Munich? All this you can do while your children acquire, for half the expense, those accomplishments which are so necessary, now-a-days, and which can only be had in perfection on the continent.”

All this is true enough, and alluring enough, only—let those who listen to the voice of the charmer, when they “Let their house and go abroad,”—take care to let it through the hands of a regular agent. When once it is known that you *are* going to “let your house and go abroad,” there is sure almost to start up some friend or acquaintance who is anxious to prevent your receiving any sort of disadvantage during your absence. He has little or nothing to do, and it

would be the greatest pleasure to him to take charge of any of your affairs. To receive and forward any parcels. To let and look after your house. Ah! good souls who would "let your house and go abroad," beware! Don't listen a moment to any such generous proffer; don't trust your property to any gratuitous goodness: send for an agent, the best known, and on the most sordid principle of security, put all your premises into his hands. If you listen to the generous offer, you are lost,—you will come back to find your house dilapidated, if not burnt down; your hedges full of gaps; your garden eaten up by bullocks; your precious books and crockery, your pictures and your panes, full of fractures and abstractions, that will probably drive you, if not to hang yourself, to some equally desperate deed. Put your premises into the house-agent's hands; and then march. In the former case, your generous, gratuitously-acting friend, has taken as little security as care. The tenants he got were his friends, it was impossible to be rigid with them; he made no inventory—and got no damages. Behold the prosaic and unsentimental house-agent. He walks down to your house, pulls out his book, and jots down in it every item in and about your house, from the garret to the cellar, from the piece of statuary to the mouse-

trap. He comes with his catalogue all drawn out in a neat firm hand, and reads over every article as you see yourself that the article is there. When you come back, if it be seven years hence, depend upon it you will have every article there, and uninjured, or you will have the full value of it. The worthy man has an interest to let your house, and to keep it let; your generous friend, as you shall soon see, has an interest of a different sort. The agent knows his own business, but he does not know whether your tenant be a great poet, a great orator, or a great philosopher; he has, therefore, no delicacy in treating with him, or calling on him to pay for a broken pot, or cracked pane. All he knows or cares is, that the gentleman pays or does not pay—keeps the house and furniture well or ill. Now let us tell a story, true to the letter, and well worth hearing.

There lived near me, some years ago, in the beautiful neighbourhood of Esher, a gentleman who wanted to “let his house and go abroad.” This house was called a cottage, and a pretty cottage it was. It lay at the foot of a hill on which stood a pleasant and mile-long village, sheltered, retired, and uncommonly pleasant. There was every reason why this house should let well. It had every convenience that was

requisite for the comfort of a family;—ample accommodation for horses, carriage, cows, and poultry; a fine young orchard, an ample and most productive garden, a convenient paddock, and a fine meadow lying on a celebrated fishing-river, with right of fishing and boating upon it to the extent of seven miles. The whole of this was to be had for seventy pounds a-year, which the hay of the meadow alone never failed to pay. The country round is beautiful, and abounding with open lands, so that you may ride from the door of the house to the race-ground of Epsom, four miles off, over unenclosed country. For a person fond of riding, or solitary rambling, the neighbourhood possesses no ordinary attractions. On one hand, in the immediate neighbourhood of the house, you had a view over a finely-cultivated country, with St. George's woody and heathy hill, crowned with its dark crest of pines, stretching along at a few miles distance, and the towers of Windsor Castle showing themselves proudly some twelve miles off. Behind you lay the woods and pleasant grounds of Claremont; and to your left the brown common, with its hills and clumps of trees, which extended all beyond Claremont, and went stretching away towards Leatherhead. At the back of Claremont, stretched over this wild

open ground, pine woods, and heathy hills,—here a large pond in their midst, and here a naked elevation, giving view of other dense woods, or of far-stretching country. In these heathery pine-woods you might wander, day after day, without encountering a single individual, except a woodman, or a few cottagers collecting fuel. You came to caverns of sand, or a deserted cottage, giving you a feeling of the utmost solitude and desolation ; yet there the ruddy squirrel was capering on the bough, or the pheasant was displaying his golden plumage in the spirit of nature's own cheerfulness. The enjoyment which I have found in these free and lonely woodlands myself, enables me to show how desirable a place of residence was the one in question. From these sandy moorland woods you came anon upon the clay, and there the scene changed. Instead of fir-trees, there grew the noble, spreading oak ; and the very common had the aspect of an ancient park. Such are the commons of Oxshot and Bookham, extensive tracts, where in spring the violets and the primroses grow, amid the thickets of holly and wild rose, carpeting the whole ground ; and the nightingales are singing in scores in the bushes around. Then, fine, airy, and prospect-commanding, is St. Ann's Hill, near

Chertsey, a pleasant drive; how charming the lanes and heaths of Weybridge, Silvermeer, Cobham, Hatchfords, and Pointers!

The gentleman, then, who wanted "to let his house and go abroad," had no doubt that he should find plenty of people ready to occupy his premises till his return; but, unluckily, he had a sort of acquaintance in town who offered to act as his steward; to let, to pay, and receive his rent. "How excellent, thought Mr. Greatfaith, the gentleman in question, to have my place under the care of a man that will, out of friendship or respect, keep a sharp eye on it; and not leave it to the mercenary mercy of an agent!" Good, simple soul! Away he went with all his family, and right pleasantly he found his time roll on abroad. But, somehow or other, how could it be?—his house did not let. His friend wrote to him that he was surprised; it was most unaccountable; but that he had tried all means; advertised, recommended,—but all in vain,—not a soul would go near it. One thought it must be damp, it lay so low, (it was as dry as a bone); another was afraid of the floods from the rain—they never came near it; a third thought it too lonely, and a fourth that it was dear! During several years that Mr. Greatfaith continued abroad, the place was only let for two months

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during two summers, but then, wrote his friendly agent, to such highly respectable people, who took care of everything. The gardener, who lived in the house when no one else was there, was so steady and orderly, and managed everything so well—the place was like a paradise. So far so good; it was a wonder that no permanent tenant could be found for such a place; but it was at least a consolation that things were so well as they were. The third summer, however, Mr. Greatfaith had occasion to come over to England. It was at the time at which one of the two so highly respectable families was in the house, and just at the crisis at which they were going to quit. It was at the latter end of summer, but not at the regular quarter-day of Michaelmas. Mr. Greatfaith determined to go down and see the old spot, and receive the keys himself. Mr. Fox, his friendly agent, was very anxious to accompany him, but happened to stumble over a bench just then, and break his shins, and Mr. Greatfaith went down himself.

Arrived at his own gate, he rang the bell, and glanced over the lawn till the servant appeared to admit him. How was it? What was the matter? This very respectable family—how had it suffered the grass to grow, the leaves to fall,

and lie scattered about, the whole place to have a look of neglect that was a strange contrast to what it was when he had been at home? He recollected that the family was Scotch, and Scotch families were sometimes, like Irish ones, not over neat in the garden. The servant appearing, informed him that her master was in town, and that her mistress was at home, but gone up stairs to dress; and he was desired to sit down till she appeared. But Mr. Greatfaith said he would just look round a little, and begged the servant to call him when her mistress was ready. He turned into the garden. Good heavens! what a scene! His nice, neat, well-kept garden!—could that be it? It was a wilderness! Cropped it had evidently been, and well too, by his attentive agent, in the spring. There was abundance of peas, beans, and every species of customary vegetables, but certainly not a weed had been pulled from the day that these useful articles had been planted. Weeds, rampant as in an Indian jungle, covered the whole space; walks, beds, everywhere they stood thick and tall, many of them as high as himself, and he wound along in unspeakable astonishment amongst them. The gooseberry, raspberry, and currant bushes, appeared to have had, as usual, noble crops, for the weeds around them were trodden

down, and they were cleared of fruit. There were heaps of cucumbers and melons; he had seen the bill for their planting, as well as of the whole garden—a nice “little account,” as the largest of these documents is always termed by those who have to receive them. “Your little account!”—which is often anything but very little—had been duly presented and paid,—and here were crops of weeds that he had had no account at all of. But there were loads of apples, pears, plums, walnuts, and all sorts of the fruit on the trees—that was something.

Full of wonder, poor Mr. Greatfaith now walked out of the garden, and emerged into the paddock. What were those objects which seemed to arrest his attention, and rivet him to the spot? Could that be his favourite horse? Could that be his cow?

Not wishing to part with his horse or his cow, which were great favourites with the whole family, he had left them on the premises, for the use of the family which might occupy the house, his friendly agent assuring him that they should be most thoroughly cared for; but here was the horse, rough, shaggy, stiff in the legs, heavy in the eye, a walking skeleton. The cow was much in the same condition; the pasture, which at this time of the year was usually most affluent,

was bare as the neighbouring common. Astonished and confounded, Mr. Greatfaith walked on into the stable-yard. Where were those five-and-twenty head of superb fowls which he had left, besides ducks, geese, and guinea-fowls? Not a head or a leg was to be seen; not a crow or a cackle was to be heard! But here the servant-girl came running in breathless haste to call the gentleman,—her mistress was ready to receive him.

In marched Mr. Greatfaith, and found himself in the presence of a tall and handsomely-dressed lady, who professed great pleasure in seeing him, and pressed him to take luncheon. But Mr. Greatfaith excused himself. He really had somehow lost his appetite. He expressed his astonishment at the condition of the garden, declaring there could have been no gardener on the ground all the summer. Where was his gardener? Why was he not kept? In reply to this he was informed that the lady's husband had taken the place for retirement, and a very pleasant, retired place it certainly was; her husband was very fond of it, but he did not like many people about him in the country, he preferred being as much as possible alone. He had told the gardener, therefore, that he could dispense with him while he was there; he liked a certain

wildness—he never “in trim gardens took his pleasure;” no, nothing could be too wild for him, who had been brought up in the Highlands. But they kept a boy regularly, and he had been employed all his spare time in the garden. Ay, thought Mr. Greatfaith, in the gooseberry and raspberry bushes!

But how came the horse, the cow, and the pasture, all in such dreadful condition? They really were most shocking.

“Ah, poor things! they were melancholy indeed; that gardener must have neglected them—never had had any use out of them—were just in that case when they came there—real objects! Her husband thought it would be a mercy to kill them out of the way!”

“And the fowls, pray where are they?” inquired Mr. Greatfaith.

“The fowls? Ah, sir, that has been a great disappointment to us. We had quite pleased ourselves with the idea of the fowls; but the former tenants, hearing that they were to make use of them, had done it effectually, for they had eaten them!”

“Eaten them!” exclaimed Mr. Greatfaith; “eaten them! What, my favourite fowls? my grand Malays! my superb Dorkings! my curious Frieslands! my golden and silver pheasant hens,

given me by Lord Amherst, and by ——. Good Lord, grant me patience! Eaten them! why I wonder they did not eat the cow, and the horse and chaise, as they were to have the use of them too!”

“I am sure they would if they could,” answered the lady; “but the horse was spavined!”

“Spavined!” echoed Mr. Greatfaith.

“Yes, spavined,” replied the lady, “and had a running in his eyes; the farrier has been all the summer doctoring and blowing dust into his eyes.”

“The devil!” exclaimed Greatfaith, who was desperate cholerick when once roused; “and there has been somebody blowing a little dust into mine too, I begin to perceive—spavined!—running in the eyes!—what, poor Bob in that condition?”

“Ay,” pursued the cool Scotchwoman, “and we thought the cow would have died; the man has been doctoring her all summer too.”

“Doctoring her! The dev——! What, doctor the finest, healthiest creature that ever cropped grass? Why, ma’am, that cow, when I left, was pronounced worth twenty guineas. She gave milk that supplied the whole family—plenty for the children, plenty for puddings, custards, syllabubs; fattened a most stupendous calf—never

saw such a calf—and made fourteen pounds of butter per week into the bargain. How *could* they manage to ruin such an animal?”

“Why, that I cannot exactly say,” said the lady; “but such a beast as you describe she never was since we saw her. I hear that the folks that were here before, sold the grazing of the meadow, and turned her upon the common, where she was a good deal run about by the other cattle and the boys.”

It would have been worth something to a painter to have been able to watch the working of Greatfaith's countenance as this conversation went on. The wrath, the indignation, that were every minute growing more desperate within him, and yet were pent up by the desire not to be uncourteous, made his blood flush into his face, and his features work in a manner that an artist would have called most admirable. At the last trial, that of the cow on the common, he started up, seized his hat, and appeared ready to dash out of the house, and fly off to execute a thousand vengeance on somebody or other; but restraining himself a moment, he said abruptly, “I thank you, madam, for your information, it is most important; but that garden! you must instantly have it put into order.”

“Oh certainly, sir!” replied the tall, comely,

very lady-like woman ; “ certainly Mr. M’Nab would never think of leaving it in that state ; though he does like a wilderness, he knows that English gentlemen don’t.”

A cool breeze seemed to pass over the heated brow of Greatfaith, and Mrs. M’Nab added, “ To-day, sir, I am aware that our term expires, and in the morning we are bound to leave ; but as your family is not in England, perhaps we might beg a favour of you. Our own house in town has been undergoing a thorough painting ; we hear that it is not quite dry, and if you would do us the great favour of permitting us to remain here for three days longer, we shall feel the obligation as it deserves, and it will allow more time to set the garden right.”

“ Oh ! a week if you like, a week if you like,” bolted out Mr. Greatfaith in rapid accents ; “ I will come down this day week and receive the keys and the rent. In the mean time, as your proper period has expired, you will be so good as not to gather more of the fruit or garden produce than you may want for your daily use, as my family is coming home, and we shall want all we can get for our winter supply.”

“ Oh dear no ! oh certainly not ! we should never think of such a thing ! We shall regard ourselves merely as guests of yours, and hold

everything sacred,—with the most grateful thanks for your truly obliging conduct.”

Away posted Greatfaith to town, to pour out the vials of his wrath on that treacherous fellow, Mr. Fox. The fury of his indignation seemed to aid the very steam in driving on the train. “All going on well! Tom the gardener keeping all in order! Capital tenants for the summer months!” continued he, muttering to himself; “and the place a wilderness! The horse! the cow! the fowls! why the scoundrel ——!”

But we will not finish the sentence as Mr. Greatfaith finished it—it would be really too hot. Arrived in the city, he was not long in reaching Mr. Fox’s door, and thumped a peal on the knocker, which brought the dirty slipshod housemaid to the door, with a face of wonder.

“Is Fox in?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Let me see him instantly!”

“Are you a doctor, sir?”

“A doctor, the devil! no; why do you take me for a doctor? Don’t you know me? How long have you lived here?”

“Two months, sir.”

“Oh then you don’t; let me see Fox.”

“But you can’t see him, if you’re not a doctor—he’s ill.”

"He's ill! What's amiss with him?"

"His leg has inflamed, where he broke his shin; he's got horrysuppolus in it, and the doctor says he must see nobody but himself."

"Devil take him!" muttered Mr. Greatfaith to himself, darting away from the house, and hastening to his own lodgings. With the utmost impatience he awaited the passing of the week, that he might hurry down to see the place clear of strangers, and give orders to restore it once more to that beautiful neatness in which he had been used to see it. But he was not destined to let the week run out thus. On the next morning, which was Monday, his butcher, who had come up to Smithfield market, presented himself at his lodgings. Appleton, the butcher, was a first-rate man of his class. Clever, managing, active, and of surest judgment, he had grown into a wealthy man, with more than one farm of his own. Greatfaith had always had a profound opinion of his business talents, and in all matters relating to the management of his land, and his horse and cow, consulted him.

"I saw you go past the other day, sir," said Appleton, "and wished to speak to you, but you went by as if you were on life and death. Gad, I could guess how it was. You found a pretty mess down there!"

"Mess!" exclaimed Greatfaith; "ruin! destruction! What *can* Fox have been about? I wish to heaven he had broken his shins before he ever went near that place! Why, he told me all was going on excellently,—Tom keeping everything in order,—and such respectable tenants in the summer!"

Appleton laughed outright. "Excuse me, sir! I can't help it, but it amazes me that a clever man like you should let people with not a tithe of your sense impose on you so. Take my word for it, this Fox *is* a fox. Why didn't you at once put your place into Dawson's hands at Kingston? I answer for it, if you had, you would have found everything just as you left it—the horse would hardly have seemed to have shed a hair. But good gracious! why it is enough to break any man's heart to think what destruction is in that place."

"Ay, the horse, the cow, the fowls, you mean?"

"I mean everything!" exclaimed the jolly butcher. "Lord! my heart aches to think what a discovery awaits you, if you have not seen it yet. I took the opportunity to go into the house one day when Tom was in the garden—there was nobody in it then—and if there be a sound glass, or a sound piece of crockery, or a table or a chair

that has not some stain or breakage, it is more than I could find. O Lord! to think of those good books! and then ——!"

"What!" exclaimed Greatfaith; "why you drive me mad!"

"It's enough to drive anybody mad," continued Appleton. Oh! if you *could* but have seen how that poor horse and chaise have been used! If you could but have seen that poor cow! I've often thought of writing over to you in foreign parts to tell you; but then I considered it's Mr. Fox's business, and people don't often thank one for meddling."

"Why didn't you?" cried Greatfaith; "zounds, why *will* people be so delicate? Tell me all about it,—out with it, Appleton,—for I must and will know."

"If I did but know where to begin," said the butcher; "but it's such a mess—and it's not all to be told in a hurry. Well, there was the horse—I wish you had taken that seventy pounds I offered you for it when you went—I told you it was sure to bring no good lending such things as these—if he has had one master he has had a dozen. First, there was Fox and his wife. They used to come down every Saturday; Tom had to meet them at the station; and on Sunday down came lots more men and women, or gentlemen

and ladies, and Tom met them with the horse and chaise. A pretty lot of them there often was; the chaise was crowded like a sheep-pen. Then, in the afternoon they were all out, flying all over the neighbourhood, with the horse and chaise again, loaded till it was fit to break down; you know how cockneys do load, and how they do drive! Whew! they were here and there; up the hill to the village; up the village round over the common, over rough and smooth; down again at night to the station with all the swarm of company. Going, they were at the last minute, lest they should lose the train, full split. Poor horse! it is a wonder they did not burst his heart. Then Fox and his wife would stay two or three days, and drive all over the country, and then go to the station loaded with hampers of fruit, and vegetables, and fowls, like a carrier's waggon. That was pretty well; but then came the family of lodgers—I mean those of the first summer, with half a dozen great boys, and what with father and mother and boys, a fine time the horse had of it. These lads used to be riding or driving him morning, noon, and night. Up the village, down the village, across the village, on any road within seven miles of it they were to be met, flogging and putting on the poor beast to his fullest speed. It was a wonder they did

not kill him and themselves, and shatter the chaise to atoms a dozen times over. Everybody cried shame on them as they drove frantically through the village, and were constantly putting the people, and especially the children, in fear of their lives. "What *can* that Mr. Fox mean," the villagers said, "to let these people do thus with another man's property?" In a while the poor horse was knocked up, but not before they had run foul of a coal waggon, smashed a wheel,—I reckon you'll find a bill of it,—and got well bruised themselves. Old Martin the smith has had to doctor the horse, but he's done for; he'll never be worth five pound again.

"Well, then, the poor cow fared little better. You told me, before you went, that a friend of yours would like to have her, if she were not wanted here. When the lodgers went, I sent to let him know he might have her, and valued her at ten pounds. He jumped at her, but presently sent her back, saying she certainly was not the cow he had seen here. And sure enough she was *not* the same, for she was a mere bag of bones."

"But why did Tom let them go on so? Fox said that Tom took such care of everything."

"Tom! ha! ha! ha! Tom! Lord, sir, you make me laugh when it's no laughing matter.

Why Tom has led a pretty jolly life of it there. When the lodgers were not there, and when Fox and his wife and friends were not there, Tom had all the rascallions in the parish down there, and a pretty life they led. They eat and drank, and rollicked, till you might have heard them singing and bawling up to the top of the common. They slept all night there, lots of them, often every bed full,—all drunk; it's the greatest mercy that they did not burn the house down. Sometimes you might have seen them chasing each other round the garden and the buildings, laughing, hallooing, and fighting with spades and forks, till it was wonderful they did not lame or kill one another. They tell me that when drunk they used to set up the finest and largest pieces of earthenware in the house, foot-baths, jars, and the like, and shy at them with candlesticks!—but you'll soon see how that matter stands when you examine the furniture."

"Did Tom do that? Where is the scoundrel?"

"Gone, sir; gone to be sure. Tom knew better than to stay till you came. He is off these three weeks, but where nobody knows. Old Martin tells me he has had to supply the place three times entirely afresh with spades, rakes, forks, and all sorts of tools, that Tom's comrades

have carried off. You'll have the bill, never fear."

"Zounds! you make me mad, and yet you never wrote to let me know!"

"Why, sir, as I told you, no one knows what to do. When one *does* put in, and think we'll do a neighbour a good turn, we often get a snub for our pains. How could I tell what such a man as Fox might be able to make you believe? but I did determine, the moment I could clap eyes on you, to make all plain."

"Well, and there is Rudstone the farmer," said Greatfaith; "he was to have an eye on the premises, why did not he let me know?—or old Randall, who slept in the house in winter?"

"Rudstone have an eye on the premises! Good faith! he had two eyes on them sure enough. Rudstone and Randall, and Tom, used to be seen stripped and fighting for fruit and garden-stuff. And, as I once went past, out came Rudstone, and said to me, 'See! there are Randall and Tom have had all the garden-stuff this month, and I have not got a bit.' 'And what business have you with a bit?' said I; 'you are all thieves together.' 'Well, somebody must have it,' said Rudstone, 'and who so much right as one who was to have an eye on the place?'"

"The cursed thieves!—the impudent, confounded thieves!" exclaimed Greatfaith.

"You let that Rudstone get up the hay of the meadow?"

"Ay, and he does seem to have made a good rick."

"Twenty tons at least," said Appleton; "and it is not worth twenty shillings a ton!"

"Why, how is that?"

"You were to give Rudstone ten pounds for getting it up, and he was to take the latter math, which you always sell for ten pounds, in lieu of it. Fox showed me his bill one day. He has charged twenty pounds for getting the hay, and ten pounds he has allowed for the lattermath, so he has thrown you ten pounds in debt. But that is nothing; he has a bill against you for all sorts of jobbings, and days, and pairings, all the time through, of seventy pounds; and, in the mean time, what is the hay worth? Instead of employing the farmers' waggon and horses as you did, and desired him to do, he borrowed the smith's pony and cart—gave him nothing—charged you full price as for the waggon and horses, and went drawling on with the carrying, day after day, till the rain came and spoiled it all. There was a week's rain. The whole inside of your rick is as black as my hat! It is fit

for nothing but to be mumbled over by hungry stirks in a straw-yard."

At the rehearsal of this long catalogue of evils, poor Greatfaith became almost beside himself. "And is it," he exclaimed, "such a villain as that Fox that I have been trusting to? Was it for this that he always told me he could not let the place to a permanent tenant? I vow that I believe he never wanted to let it!"

"How should he?" asked Appleton. "Why, sir, you should not put such temptations in a man's way. Don't you see that this was a terrible bait for a Londoner? It was a country house for him and his friends. They could not have such another place easily, and especially at another man's expense. Here, they had a fine country, a good house, a horse and chaise, a cow, a capital orchard and garden, all to run down to when they pleased. Why, who would not jump at such a chance? Has not Tom sent up, week after week, jolly hampers of fowls, so fattened with barley that they actually leaned against the barn for heaviness, and some of them died of apoplexy? And what hampers of fruit and vegetables I've seen travelling the same road!"

"But," pursued the butcher, assuming a serious look, "what's past cannot be helped; thank God you are come safe and sound home, and all will

soon be right again. But what I came to speak to you about now, was what is going on just at this moment. You have given the people in the house a few extra days, they tell me,—and what did they want them for? To let their paint dry, eh? I'll tell you what it was for—it was to be able to strip your orchard and garden of everything in them! My man went down on Saturday to see if they wanted any meat, and what did he see? There were the mistress and three maids, at as many fires, with their gowns pulled up through their pocket-holes, that they might not burn, all as busy as birds a-building, in boiling preserves. They tell me they have been at it, almost day and night, since you were there. They had left the fruit to the last minute, because a deal of the finest was not ripe, and now they are stowing away by wholesale. There were two or three great fellows with ladders in the trees, clearing off pears, apples, and walnuts, ripe, or unripe. If you are not quick upon them, there won't be a grumpling even left on a topmost bough. It is the same with the early potatoes; they are bagging them, and a good load, as well as of fruit, is already on its way to London."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Greatfaith, springing to his feet, "can there be such villainy?"

Could they possibly ask me to give them a few days only to rob me? I must be off this instant. Which way are *you* going, Appleton?"

"With you. I have done my marketing."

They both went hastily out together. They both bolted down into the country together, but they were too late. The boiling was done, the fires extinguished, the fruit trees in garden and in orchard were stripped as clean as clever hands could do it, and the old woman in the house presented a note from Mrs. M'Nab, thanking Mr. Greatfaith most kindly for his *very* obliging prolongation of their stay, and enclosing the cheque for the rent. The garden certainly did not present so lofty a crop of weeds, but it was merely because in gathering the fruit and digging up the potatoes, much of the weeds had been trampled down, or cut up. The garden was still a wilderness, and more of a ruin.

A few weeks were sufficient to put the gardens and grounds into order again; but the house! every object on which Greatfaith cast his eyes presented some dreadful damages that went to his heart. Almost all the earthenware, including thirty pounds worth of chamberware, with fine tall jars, foot-baths, &c., were shattered to pieces. His books were defaced, torn, and in many instances gone altogether. Carpets, and

covers of tables and sofas, were ruined for ever by the foulest stains; and even the valuable articles, which had been locked and screwed up, had been, through permission of Fox and the agency of Rudstone, brought out, and shared in the general mischief. The wine in the cellar was emptied to the last bottle, though the cellar had been screwed and sealed up, and a thirty-gallon barrel of orange wine, brewed from a particular receipt, which, as a fine stomachic, was used by Greatfaith, and had been made just before going away in the idea that it would be prime on his return, was drunk to the dregs, and the bung-hole was stopped with a piece of Tom's old trousers. The peculiar large striped pattern of this remarkable garment was so well known to Greatfaith, that on the first glance at it he became speechless with rage. The rogue had, evidently, been so intoxicated on his last occasion of drawing, that he had lost the bung, and supplied its place with this tell-tale cloth. Well was it that Tom had fled!

But who was to make all this damage good? Nobody. Fox, unlike a regular agent, had taken no guarantee from any one, and Greatfaith must put up with the loss. Well had it been had it ended here; but no sooner did the tradesmen in the village hear of Mr. Greatfaith's arrival than

they hastened down with a deluge of bills. Bills! "What had he to do with bills?" he asked, and very reasonably. But they soon showed him that, he had much to do with them, in fact, he had—just to pay them.

There were bills of all sorts, just as if he had been at home. There was the blacksmith's bill for doctoring horse and cow, for supplying all kinds of new tools, with scythes and haymaking apparatus, three times over. There were bells and bell-wires put in order, and new supplied. And, amongst a hundred other things, the horse had been, regularly the whole three years, shod once a month, even when he was running ill and useless in the summer paddock! There was a coachmaker's bill of £17,14s. 2½d. for repairing and new painting and varnishing chaise, after being smashed by the boys. There was a wheel-right's bill for mending cart and wheel-barrows. There was Rudstone's bill for seventy pounds, part of which he had got in hay, etc. There were grocer's, brewer's, butcher's, and corn-chandler's bills, just as usual, for servants, fowls, horses, etc. It was in vain that poor Greatfaith declared that he had nothing to do with all this, that the people must pay for those things who had had them, and his servants, who were at board wages:—it mattered not—*his* servants had

ordered them, and Fox, now regularly and venomously at feud, because Greatfaith had sent him an angry letter, declared that all had his sanction. Poor Greatfaith was sturdy, and refused payment. Rudstone soon had recourse to law; there was a trial, Rudstone won it—and that decided all the rest.

Disgusted with the place from all these annoyances, Greatfaith determined to quit it, and dispose of his house. In this mood of mind, as he was in the act of issuing from his gate, a stout, pleasant-looking gentleman rode up to it. "Did he see Mr. Greatfaith?" he asked, "and was the place to let?"

"Both," answered Mr. Greatfaith. "I'll let you have my house for nothing."

"You will! Well, that is famous. Why, do you know I have been told three times that this place was to let; three times I have applied to your friend, Mr. Fox, and as often he has told me it was a mistake—it was not to be let."

"He did!" Mr. Greatfaith stood and looked a thousand astonishments; then added, as if to himself, "Now I see it all. Why, what a fool I have been! Here has this Fox, sir—don't call him any friend of mine—been pretending to let the place, ay, and advertising it; and then he tells you it was not to let. The villain! he was

making his country-house of it! Sir, you look a genuine gentleman, I will make few words with you,—you see me in the right humour for you. The lease is yours on the same terms that I have it, and all charges paid up to Christmas.”

“Done!” said the gentleman, who *was* a gentleman, though Greatfaith, in his usual precipitate, confiding way, had not made a single inquiry about him, when he thus at once struck the bargain. “Done! it is of all things what I have set my heart on. I will be here the moment the transfer of the lease is completed.”

“Come to-morrow if you will,” said Greatfaith, exchanging addresses with the unknown, and appointing the very next day to meet at his solicitor’s. Scarcely had he quitted the stranger, when at the bottom of the lane he met his old friend and neighbour, Captain Bontems.

“Oh! a thousand welcomes, Greatfaith! I hope you are coming home now.”

“Not I,” replied Greatfaith, “I am *going* home; I have left this place for ever.”

“You have! why, Greatfaith, then I think you have not used me well.”

“Not used you well, Bontems! what, in the name of St. Michael, can you mean?”

Here Captain Bontems informed Mr. Greatfaith that two of his friends, great fishermen, had

been anxious to take his premises, but that Fox, on all applications, had assured him that they were not to be let; "and now," said he, "without a word to me, you have thrown up your lease to a stranger."

We need not attempt to describe Greatfaith's exasperation. He explained to Captain Bontems to what an extent he had been duped, and wringing his hand with an energy in which indignation against his plunderers gave to Bontems a somewhat delusive idea of the warmth of his friendship for him, he for the last time ascended to the village, and steamed away to London.

Remember poor Greatfaith, and that there are such things as licensed agents, all ye who want to "Let your house and go abroad!"

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NOOKS AND BACK SETTLEMENTS

OF

ENGLAND.

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VOL. II.

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THE
COUNTRY MANTY-MEKKER.

THE more one sees of other countries, the more one is satisfied of the truth of the common assertion, that there is no country where such variety of curious and independent individual character abounds as in our own. The freedom of our constitution, both in politics and Religion, is undoubtedly the cause of it. We have so many sects, and so many opinions of our own on all matters, that we stand up for them with a pertinacity which grows on us both with the growth of centuries, and of our own years. We have no government police entering into our houses, however they may now parade before them, and compelling us to do this and that, even to the sweeping of our chimneys, and the making of our coffins, contrary to

our own pleasure and notions of what is right. Government fleeces us sweepingly enough of our cash, but in other respects, and especially in provincial towns and country places, we do just as we like, and some of us grow into habits and ideas most amusing. I have formerly shewn some specimens of this in my "Nooks of the World;" and how many more Nooks might we visit in this land of good, hard-headed John Bull, abounding with oddest scenes and characters! There might be a dozen more volumes of "The Eccentric Mirror" written out of one's own knowledge. Let us from time to time pen a few down.

A friend of mine had remarked for some time, in Nottingham, where he lived, a singular-looking woman going to and fro in the streets past his house. She was tall and strong; had the figure and gait of a man; had a strong expressive countenance, full of a strange but original character; in short, was one out of the ordinary class of mortals. "That woman," said he to himself, "is no townswoman. She has grown up in some country place; she has not only a character, but a history, and I should like to know it." As he passed her once in the street, she seemed to look hard and searchingly at him, as if to say, "Who are you, now? You don't seem

to me just like the rest of these townsfolks, who don't care a halfpenny for anybody that isn't dressed up as grand as my lord or my lady." Perhaps it might be that he looked hard at *her*. His desire to have a little talk with her increased.

One day he saw her enter a shop, and stepped in too. The tall, strange woman was asking for a pennyworth of red ochre. The shopman put it down before her, ready wrapped in paper. She slowly opened it, and then pushed it back towards him, saying, "Well, now, cut that into two." The man very politely did so. She weighed the two pieces in her hand, and giving him one back, said, "Wrap me that up again; I'll take this mysen — it's rayther the heaviest — 'tother's for a neebor."

As she saw my friend smile, she turned towards him, and without any preface, added—

"What a thing this self is! It's the last thing that leaves us i' this world!"

"That's an honest confession, at least," said my friend. "I think, my good woman, that you were not brought up in this town."

"No, I reckon I warn a neither. You're reght there, mester. I'm none o' your finikin townswomen. You may see that at a look. I reckon I should mak two of the regular town-

grown women. No, I was born and brought up i' th' country, where there's life and strength i' th' very air. I was used from a little wench to run about i' th' clooses; fetch up th' cows; look after th' lambs and pigs; aye, and drive th' plough at a pinch. My fayther war a little farmer, and a hard-working man he war, and made us all work anau. When I war grown up, my fayther deed, and left me up o' th' farm, and I war fool enough to marry."

" Fool enough?"

" Aye, fool enough! It's truth, man; I dunna pretend to deny it. I'm none of your fine, finnikin things as is ashamed to say th' truth. What's done's done, and cannot be undone,—more's th' pity! But where's th' use to deny it? Aye, fool war I! But I war only like mony o' one besides. That's th' misfortin on't, young mon—mind what I say, that's th' misfortin on't. We have to tak the most important step in our lives, th' step as requires most sense, just when we've gotten th' least sense; and so we have to smart for't. By Leddy, I've smarted enough for my folly. Th' young fellow as I married, war a likely young chap to look at, but he war good for nowt. He war too fond of sitting i' th' ale-house nook, and I soon fun out that he'd only married me for what he could get. I went on workin day after

day. I went to th' plough, to th' team, fetched up th' cows, and milked 'em. I war up o' summer mornings by four o'clock, and came home from milking daggled up to th' knees wi' dew, and there was he hulking i' bed. By Leddy, I war fit sometimes to go and fling a good sousing bucket o' water on him as he lay. But that warna the worst. Every night he war sure to be i' th' alehouse; and mony and mony a time have I had to fetch him away, and pay his shot into th' bargain.

"Thinks I to mysen, my lad, this wunna do for me. I dunna mean thee to shut th' bit o' money my fayther got with such sweat and trouble; no, by Guy! that I dunna! So, I threw up th' farin; sold th' stock, and come reght away to Nottingham."

"And what became of your husband?"

"What became of him? He followed me, to be sure—what was he likely to do, a poor dirty rogue? Trust him for running after the money. Aye, he set his nose after it like a ferrit. He made hissen sure now of laying hands on't in some hole or coorner o' th' house or other. But I took pretty good care he shouldna:

" 'Where's th' money, wench?' he often said.

" 'Where should it be?' said I, 'but gone to

pay debts off that a drunken sot like thee sets on.' But it signified nowt—he knew better, and he war always gropin' about, high and low, after it. 'Get to work!' said I; 'thou's limbs big enough, and a carcase strong enough—get a spade, or a pick, and do summut for thy bread, as I do. I shall turn manty-mekker.'

"Aye mester, you may smile. You dunna think I look much like a manty-mekker; and I'll allow," said she, showing her great hard bony hands, "but these hands as ha' handled th' pitchfork, and held th' plough, dunna look th' likeliest i' th' world to handle a needle and thrid. But where there's a will there's a way; and I can assure you, I can mak a tightish sort of a gown—aye, I can please these fine town wenches better than you'd think for.

"But I'm overrunning my story. I took a house, and began manty-mekking. That dirty rogue of a husband o' mine was always progging about th' house to find out where I'd put the money, but I took care. One day, in walks a man with a book in his hand, and said, 'Missis, I want th' poor-rates'

"'Poor-rates!' said I. 'By Leddy! thou art come to a wrong house then. I'm a poor woman mysen, man.'

“ ‘ That may be,’ said he, ‘ but you’ve ta’en a house of five pounds a year, and either you or th’ landlord mun pay the poor-rates.’

“ ‘ Then let the landlord pay ’em,’ said I, ‘ he’s able enough.’

“ ‘ That’s true as th’ gospel, missis,’ says th’ man, ‘ but he wunna!’

“ ‘ And I canna!’ said I.

“ ‘ But you mun,’ said he.

“ ‘ But if a body canna,’ says I, ‘ what then?’

“ ‘ Then,’ says he, ‘ you mun go to th’ work-house, and other people mun pay to you. That’s the way now o’ days ; all pay as long as they can, even when the children are crying upon the door-sill for a roasted potato ; and when they can pay no longer, they turnen out, and so to th’ work-house.’

“ ‘ Man,’ said I, for I had bin conning him o’er as he war talking a thissens,—and I seed as plain as a pike-staff, that th’ fellow, spite of his trade, war an honest sort o’ chap—‘ Man,’ said I, ‘ canst tell me where to put a bit o’ money out safe?’

“ ‘ Well,’ said he, giving me a queer sort of look, as much as to say, ‘ I thought you said you’d got none,’—‘ maybe I *could* do that too.’

“ ‘ Then do!’ said I, getting a chair, and retching up to th’ top of an old cupboard—‘ do ; for here I’ve gotten the plague of my life,—a bit of

money in an old stocking, and it keeps me in a continual fever; for that rogue of a husband o' mine is always progging after it, and one of these days he'll get hold on't, and then I'm ruined for ever.'

"So down I brings th' owd stocking, and holding it open afore th' man—'There,' says I, 'there's just four hundred gowden guineas there!' and wi' that I held it up to hin, and my eyes! but th' man did stare!

" 'Missis,' said he, 'that's a sight good for sore eyes, however.' "

"I am afraid," said my friend, "you were not very prudent though, to show such a sum thus to a stranger."

"Prudent, warn't I? Dost ta think, then, mon, that I've got no white in my eye? Yay, I know an honest man from a rogue when I see him. The man was as good as his word. He took me to a gentleman that gave me good security for my money, and I get my interest to the day. Many's the time that dirty rogue of a husband o' mine has hunted the house over for th' money. Nation! how he wonders what's gotten it! I can always tell when he's bin after it. I find iverything turned topsy-turvy i' th' drawers and iverywhere. But I'll take care he never comes at it, a dirty rogue, him."

“Well,” said my friend, “you certainly have little comfort in him.”

“Comfort! no! my comfort lies in a different quarter. I look for very little comfort in this world; but, thank God, there is a comfort, even here, and that’s in Religion!

“We’re all poor creatures! I found my business flourish; money came in; and yet I wasna somehow right. Everything seemed so coud and hollow. I war always sighing and malancholy i’ th’ midst o’ plenty. My husband’s goings on made me half mad. Night after night I had to fetch him home from the ale-house. One day, however, comes a nice young woman to have a gown made, and she says to me—‘Missis, do you ever go to a place o’ worship?’

“‘No,’ said I, ‘I’m ashamed to say I dunna. To say th’ truth, I dunna rightly know where to go to. Thou sees, I’m a stranger here, and I dunna like to go amongst folks as I dunna know.’

“‘Ah!’ said th’ young woman, ‘I wish you would go with me on Sunday to the Methodists’ Chapel; I think you’d be pleased; and perhaps you’d find a comfort you little dream of. On Sunday, oh! there is a nice man coming from Lunnon; they cawn him Robert Newton.’

“‘Well,’ says I, ‘as thou says so much, and axes me so kindly, I dunna mind if I do go. I’m

sorely in want of summut ; and I think it's because I dunna seek Religion.'

" Well, I went. It was a big chapel, an' lighted up into a blaze brighter than any sunshine welly ; and as I went in at th' door, says I to mysen—' Now, wool this wench be ashamed on me ? I shouldna wonder, for I'm not just th' sort of body to be proud on for a companion ; and it's one thing to ax a poor old woman like me to go to chapel, and another to like to be seen wi' her. But in we goen. It war as bright as day, and a pratty throng o' fine dressy folks there war ; but up walks th' brave lass up th' middle of aw, and turning round to me—' Come along, neebor,' says she, ' my seat's up here ;' and in she takes me. By leddy ! I niver felt so queer in aw my life ! Aw eyes seemed to be set on me ; and well they might, for I seed I must look like a crow in a flock o' pigeons. And what a man war that Robert Newton ! Eh ! what a tongue he had ! Ivery word that he said went like a shot to my heart. He told us what sinful creaturs we aw war ; and ivery time that he lifted his hand, it war like Moses smiting th' rock i' th' wilderness. Th' watter started out o' my heart, and th' tears run down my cheeks ; and he soon seed that, and what does he, but fixes his eyes on me, and point-to me, shouts out—' There ! that woman is

touched ! She is reached ! If she stands to what she has got, salvation is come to her !' and then one and another cried out—'Christ Jesus grant it ! Amen ! Amen !'

" Well, I was niver in such a takking in my life. I was all of a tremble and a quake, and th' lights and iverything spun round wi' me. As we went home, th' young woman asked me how I liked it ? ' Oh !' said I, ' I niver was so bad and and niver so well in all my days. Oh ! what a sinner I've bin ! Oh ! what must I do to be saved ?'

" ' Thank God ! thank God !' said th' young woman. ' You are in the right way now, and if you only go on it will be a blessed day for you, and for me too, you came to the chapel.' And now, aw my comfort's i' religion. I go regularly to chapel. I'm in a class, and all the society is very kind to me. But dunna think that I've had nothing but swimming work of it. No, the divel came after me like a roaring lion,—and oh ! what a nasty divel it is !

" One day a young woman brought a gown-piece for me to make up. It was a very fine, rich, valuable gown-piece indeed ; and when I come to measure it, then I found that there was a yard and a half of the stuff too much ; and such good stuff, too !

“ ‘ Tak it ! tak it ! ’ says the divel ; ‘ they ’ ll niver know ! ’

“ But the Lord said in my heart, ‘ Dunna tak it, woman, it ’ s none o ’ thine ! ’

“ ‘ Tak it ! ’ again says the divel.

“ ‘ Let it alone ! ’ says the Lord.

“ Oh ! what a day I had on ’ t ; till at last I ups and rolls the piece together, and off to th ’ young woman, and flinging it down, says—‘ There ! there ’ s that too much ! ’ Away I goes back, thinking then what gladness I should have. But I was mistaken. The divel seemed like a raging going fire. He war at me aw the way home. He seemed to drive me up th ’ street like a great wind. ‘ Well,’ said he, ‘ and what better art thou now ? Art ta any fuller, or any fatter ; any richer or any better ? ’ Oh ! what a nasty divel it is ! Well, well, I mun bear my trials and my temptations, I reckon, like other folks ; and learn not to set my heart too much on the things of this world. And that ’ s what that dirty rogue o ’ a husband o ’ mine is always telling me ; and it ’ s true, but I know why *he* tells me that,—it ’ s because he wants to find th ’ owd stocking-full of guineas. But I ’ ll tak precious good care that he doesna. Oh ! what a dirty rogue he ’ s been to me,—he has driven me to God ! ”

With this the old dame turned to walk out,

nodding significantly to my friend, but stopping suddenly, she looked at the two halfpenny-worths of red ochre which she held in her hands, and said as to herself,—“ Let me see, which is which? Aye, this is for mysen, it's the biggest—tother's for a neebor !”

DICK REDFERN,

THE

COUNTRY WAG.

IF every man who was brought up in a thoroughly old-fashioned country village, would turn back to the memory of his boyish days, and call to mind the people and their habits that he finds there, what a curious assemblage would they be! Never was there a part of the nation where a more odd set of fellows lived and flourished, than in the very neighbourhood where I was born. I have given some good specimens of this free and humoursome race, both in the "Boy's Country Book," and the nooks included in my "Rural Life of England." These were so uncommon, that there were sagacious readers who winked

knowingly, and set them down, in their superior sagacity, for inventions of my own ; while so true were they, and so immediately recognised in the place itself, that more than one burly son of queer independence threatened hard with actions of libel, but felt the sketches of himself or his fathers so true that he grumbled, bit his lips, and died like the wolf, in silence. As in many another neighbourhood, the flood of population and taste has now rushed in there, washed away many a heap of gathering eccentricities, which time would otherwise have matured into racy richness, and left a bustling, and yet poor generation, where all, fifty years ago, was still as Sleepy Hollow, except when the little knot of its roystering eccentrics made the public-house ring with their fits of laughter, and gave birth to anecdotes which still live and circulate amongst a less old-fashioned tribe. It is time to snatch a few more shadows from the retreating past, and let them live a little longer as they lived in the days of our fathers.

Oh, for a few years of leisure to wander about in the rural districts of Old England ; to sit on the bench of the village ale-house, or by the farm or cottage fire, and hear the stories of the country round circulate, as I used to hear them in my boyhood ! There would be more knowledge of English country life and character thus brought to

light than has ever yet been so by the keenest or most honest observer. What tales, what jokes, what scenes and characters, has every old village—that live only there, and die for ever to the world at large! Sunlit side of the odorous haycock; russet and shady side of the corn-shock; sweet shadow of the summer tree, where the labouring rustics and the rustic dames and damsels refresh themselves from their field labours; sunny ingle of farm and hamlet inn! what wealth of wit and humour, story and exhibition of life, do you daily enjoy and then let perish, that would enrich the written page, beyond the proudest stretch of imagination! Where was it but here that Shakespeare picked up his exhaustless affluence of sly humour, quaint adage, flash of rustic wit, snatch of merry or melancholy song, and rare treasury of home knowledge of human nature? What a field for him would have been my native hamlet! What a strange old scene it must have been in my father's time! There was old Squire Fletcher that lived at the Hall, and old Kester Colclough that lived at Godkin House up in the fields; they were the old gentlemen of the place, and the centre of the village knot of merry fellows that made the King of Prussia, the chief ale-house, ring with their mirth. And how often was the mirth at their expense! For there was Dick

Redfern the wit, to turn it against them, and Sammy Hand, a new purchaser in the parish, and Adam Woodward the baker, and Tom Marshall the shopkeeper, and Bill Newton, and Jack Shelton, the greatest scapegrace in the place, to join in the laugh.

Old Squire Fletcher was the very soul of good-nature, and old Kester Colclough "as soft as a boiled turnip," to use the phrase that Dick Redfern used in describing him. These two old worthies were like many others who have lived on their hereditary property, without exertion, labour or care, till their very intellect seemed to have turned into fat and good fellowship, and till, at last, both family and estate expired of inanition. So simple was old Kester, or, as the village in its dialect called him, "Old Mester Colclough," that he was the perpetual butt of the wags, and when he heard of any pranks or mischief, he declared positively it must be done by "Bill Newton, Jack Shelton, or somebody else!"

Dick Redfern was the only one of those jolly companions who was left in my time. I remember him a thin old fellow, as crazy as one much more renowned for wit, Dean Swift, was in his latter days. He was the last melancholy relic of his generation; all his contemporaries were dead, and all his "quips and cranks" were dead with

them. He would come light and thin, and grey as a shadow, down to the Fall, my grandfather's house, a mile below the village, sit him down a moment, talk of Bill Newton, Jack Shelton, or somebody else, and then say restlessly he must away to "the Fall," where he actually was, and when he got to the village, say he must away "to the village, for old Squire Fletcher and old Kester Colclough were waiting for him at the King of Prussia."

A more melancholy ruin of a right merry fellow cannot be imagined. Old Squire Fletcher had long lain in his vault under the yew-tree; and Bill Newton and Jack Shelton had vanished under their grassy mounds; and in the Hall now lived one Sampson Hooks—for the people would never honour him with the title of Squire; and the sons of Bill Newton were become his prey and the prey of his bailiff, Joe Ling. But of these men anon, when we have wandered back a little over the earlier days of poor Dick Redfern.

Dick had been a wag from his ladhood, and could not help it. It was bred in him; and, as he used to say himself, "what is bred in the bone will never be out of the flesh." He had a head, and it had its bumps, that were sure to bring him as many knocks—though there were no phrenologists born then to tell him the reason of it. He

could no more help being a wag, than Sam Foote could. He once thought he would be a farmer; but while he was learning the rudiments of that profession, his humour put his mistress out of humour with him, and he was ordered to carry his "framps and his impudence away with him."

His offence was merely what the German wag, Eulenspiegel, used to affront so many people with, shewing the truth, not in a symbol, but in a matter of fact. His mistress kept cows and sold milk, and one day she said to Dick, "Dick, give the cows some turnips, and give the best cow twice as many as the rest."

Dick very soberly served all the cows with about a peck a-piece, and then reared about two pecks round the pump in the yard. There needed no explanation of this odd act. The conscience of the good woman flashed in her face; she came out like a heroine; flung a broom at the head that started such a mischievous idea, which would have made it sing inwardly if it had not had a most admirable capacity of ducking, and bade him come for his wages when he wanted them. Dick flew out of the yard faster than the dame had flown out of the house, and never came again for his wages; but whenever the good woman appeared in the village, he was sure to appear on the wall of the churchyard, itself lying level

with the inside of the wall and high above the street, and as she went past, call out, amid the laughter of his fellow-boys and of the village, "Good Mother Watery, how goes it with the iron-tailed cow?"

It was not many weeks before Dick's wages were paid to his mother, with an offer to apprentice him to a plumber and glazier twenty miles off. The offer was accepted, and Dick disappeared for a season. The biography of his apprenticeship is unknown. He came from time to time for a few days' holiday to his native village, and, every time turned the old place upside down with his tricks, his jokes, his fun and his cleverness. He could play on the fiddle to a miracle; and, as soon as his time was out, he set up as plumber and glazier, fiddler and wag of the whole neighbourhood. So long as the village church stands, so long will Dick Redfern be talked of: how he was the soul of all parties where he came; how he made the parlour of the King of Prussia the merriest place in England; how old Squire Fletcher used to laugh till he cried, and fall off his chair at Dick's nonsense; and how old Kester Colclough declared that neither Bill Newton, Jack Shelton, nor anybody else, could come up to him; how he used to propagate the most extraordinary stories by appearing to read them out of

the newspaper, of which he was always the reader in the parlour of the King of Prussia ; how these stories were told the whole country round, and declared to be in the newspapers ; but when people looked for them they were not to be found ; on which, Dick, when appealed to, would say, " Did I read that ? If I did, I have forgotten it. Nay, lad, I rayther think thou must ha' dreamed it ! " How Dick, with Bill Newton and Jack Shelton, went round about as itinerant showman, as Dick said, to shew his comrades what fools there were in the country ; how they gave out that they had a most outlandish animal to exhibit, and always hired a barn for the purpose ; how they hung up a sheet across, and Dick entertained the people with a long and wonderful story of the wonderful properties of this animal, while Bill Newton took the sixpences at the door, and Jack Shelton made uncouth noises behind the sheet, which filled the people with the strangest expectation, till, the house being filled, Dick and Jack withdrew behind the sheet, and all three stole silently out at the door and away over the hills as fast as they could, laughing all the time at the concourse of simpletons in the barn, who sate and sate until some one at length, lifting a corner of the sheet, astonished the whole assembly by the discovery of nothing !

This campaign made the King of Prussia uproarious with laughter and applause for a whole winter; but old Squire Fletcher asserting that this might pass with the country hawbucks, but would not do with the sharp chaps of the towns; and old Mester Colclough saying, "No, no, neither Bill Newton nor Jack Shelton, nor nobody else, could pass off their jokes on the townsmen;" the three set off again. There was soon seen at fairs and statutes far and wide, a booth with a large placard on the front:—"Here all good people are taught, in two minutes, and at the small charge of one shilling, how to carve without cutting themselves."

There was soon seen an eager crowd assembled before this booth. Everybody was asking those who came out whether it were worth seeing, and everybody, with a knowing shake of the head, said, "Oh, very, very! See it by all means!"

So in went everybody, and there they saw a man—it was Dick—standing with a huge round of beef before him, cutting with the edge of the knife turned from him, the most delicate slices, and exclaiming the while, "Ladies and gentlemen, always cut in this direction, and you will never cut yourselves!"

"Is that all?" exclaimed everybody; and Dick, grave as a judge, always replied, "Yes,

all, and sufficient; always cut in this direction, and it is impossible you can cut yourselves."

The people, vexed at their folly, but ashamed to confess it, withdrew, and as they passed out, crowds of eager waiters demanded, "Is it worth seeing?" To which many replied, "Oh, certainly! See it by all means!"

Thus went Dick and his comrades, safe and sound, all round the country, and returned to their village in some months, with their bags loaded with the money of the ninny-hammers of the towns, and to the no small amazement of old Squire Fletcher and old Mester Colclough.

From that day they reigned the oracles of the King of Prussia, and not a trick could be played but old Kester declared it to be the work either of "Bill Newton, Jack Shelton, or somebody else."

If Dick made them merry at the King of Prussia, he made them just as merry in every other house. He was a free guest in every cottage and farm all round. Wherever he came, there came with him frolic and wonder. The children shouted and clapped their hands, for he played them all sorts of good-humoured tricks, and romped with them like a great lad. The girls all smiled and blushed as he came near, for he was sure to have some funny thing to say to them.

of their sweethearts; and all the country fellows stood with their mouths wide open when he spoke, for they expected that something wonderful would drop out of his.

But he did not draw more smiles out of their faces than he did capers out of their legs; for he was the only fiddler at wake or Whitsuntide that they would have. Nay, his fiddle, they said, spoke and made them leap about like peas in a frying-pan.

My father, once coming out of Derby on a market-day, saw a great crowd assembled on Chester Green, and heard from it at the same time the merry music of a fiddle, and the most boisterous laughter. As he came nearer, he thought, why, that can be no other fiddle than Dick Redfern's; and so he rode quietly up, and peeped over the heads of the crowd into the interior of the circle. Sure enough, there stood Dick Redfern, fiddling away with all his might, and with a gravity solid as that of the stone-post against which he leaned, whilst who should there be leaping and skipping about to the sound of the fiddle, but a lanky old gardener of the village, Jonathan Moore. Dick's fiddle did indeed seem to speak, and Jonathan obeyed all its injunctions to the letter, amid the continuous laughter of the bystanders. The fiddle said, as plainly as could

be, "Lie thee down, Jonathan! roll over, Jonathan! spin away, spin away, Jonathan!"

Every note of the fiddle told on Jonathan just as the string twitches on the paper harlequin. Now he was prostrate on the green; now rolling over; now springing up, and now whirling round like a mad Dervise at his devotions. My father rode quietly off again without being perceived by Jonathan, though the twinkle of Dick Redfern's eyes gave sign that he was well enough perceived by him.

A few days after this, Jonathan was nailing up some trees for my father, for whom he almost daily worked, when, after standing and looking at him some time, he said, "Well done, Jonathan! spin away, Jonathan!"

Jonathan started; stood a moment, first turning red, and then white, and then exclaimed, "By Guy, Mester, and so yo seed me t'other day with Dick on Chester Green? By-leddy, but that fellow's fiddle has witchcraft in it. I had had a sup of ale at th' Fox and Owl, and just as I came over the Green, up comes Dick behind me, and struck up with his fiddle; I gave a leap half as high as myself, and began capering away spite of myself. If I must have died for it the next moment, I could not have helped myself. The fiddle screeched, my limbs went—and 'od rot it, though!"

—but I'd rayther ha' gen onything than yo should ha' seen me sich an old fool!"

Dick had often business at Eastwood, about two miles from his own village, and as often made the guests merry by his fun at the Sun there. In Eastwood lived an old herbalist, one Amos Wire; one of those simple, credulous old men of the last, and even of the present generation, in country places, who still believe in all that Culpepper says. He accordingly gathered his plants in particular phases of the moon, and under the particular planets that Culpepper directs, and doctored a host of people as simple as himself. Dick Redfern was very fond of sitting an hour with old Amos, to hear him talk of "yarbs and trines, tangents and culminations," or to wander with him into the woods and meadows as he gathered his medicinal plants, and converse, with a well-assumed gravity, on all his subjects of faith and fancy. It was rich food for the parlour of the King of Prussia; and so well did he play his part, that Amos took the strangest fancy to him, and Dick declared that he believed that if he were, in the name of the Lord, to command old Amos to do the rashest deed, he would verily do it, such was his child-like credulity.

This gave a hint to Bill Newton and Jack Shelton, who thought they could strike out of it

a benefit for their friend. Accordingly, they appeared under the window of Amos's parlour, where he slept, in his low cottage of one story, before it grew light one morning, and one of them said, in a solemn tone, "Amos! Amos!" On which, poor Amos, who was probably lying awake thinking of his plants and planets, immediately made answer, in a voice of the deepest reverence, "Speak, Lord, for thy sarvant heareth!" To which the rogues without rejoined, "Amos! Amos! I command thee to arise and break all the church windows!"

To which Amos at once replied, "Lord! thy sarvant will obey thee!"

On this, the two fellows hastened away to watch in the churchyard for the approach of the old man. As he did not arrive, however, so soon as they expected, and as the dawn rapidly advanced, they fell to and demolished the windows themselves, and hastened away, knowing that Dick Redfern would have to glaze them, and thinking that it would be a capital job for him. Amos, who, though old and slow, was as zealous as he was credulous, soon after appeared on the scene, armed with a long leaping-pole which he had used in nimbler days, to enable him to spring across streams and bogs, on his herbalist rambles. No sooner, however, did he see that the win-

dows were all broken, than, with a look of astonishment and self-reproach, he made his retreat.

Scarcely was daylight established, when the strange discovery of the demolition of the windows was made, and flew all over the parish. Many were the conjectures who the sacrilegious depredators could be, and some one soon said that he had seen old Amos Wire coming in haste, at daybreak, out of the churchyard, armed with his rantipole. This was enough : Amos was speedily summoned to the presence of the Squire, who was the magistrate. Accused of the fact, Amos did not attempt to deny it ; on the contrary, he frankly declared that he had been called upon by the voice of the Lord to go and do that deed, and went on purpose ; but, to his astonishment, had found that he had not been active enough in his zeal, and that, to his unspeakable mortification, some more faithful servant had been employed to execute it.

Such was the well-known truth and simplicity of Amos, that both magistrate and clergyman saw at once that the thing was the work of some designing scoundrels who meant to have made a tool of him, but had, probably, as was the fact, found him too tardy in his motions. He was therefore dismissed, and a messenger was sent off for the glazier, our Dick. But the two perpetra-

tors were before him, and related what they had done, and what a famous job it would be for him. To their great amazement, however, instead of signs of correspondent joy in Dick's face, they saw him stand as if he was shot, and, with a face white as a ghost, he exclaimed,

"'Od rot it, lads! You've done for me! *I glaze the whole church by the year!*"

This was a blow too much. It spoiled, for a while, all his mirth. It cost him the whole of his spare capital to repair the disastrous labour of his friends, who, thunderstruck at the announcement of a fact of which they had never dreamed, slunk away and dared not for many a day to show their faces at the King of Prussia.

Dick faithfully repaired all the windows with glass of the best quality, never asking a consideration of the parish for so unlooked-for an accident; and as for Bill Newton and Jack Shelton, they were as poor as church-mice themselves, and could not help him to repair their fault by helping him to repair the windows. From that time the glory of the King of Prussia departed. Old Kester Colclough, when he heard of the transaction, was nearer the mark than he perhaps had ever been before, for he protested that it "was certainly Bill Newton, Jack Shelton, or somebody else."

Old Squire Fletcher died soon after. Mester Colclough became too infirm to get to the village, and in a few years died also. Bill Newton was overtaken by troubles which curbed his spirit, and Jack Shelton went off nobody knew whither. Yet for many a year afterwards did poor Dick Redfern wander about the old neighbourhood, a thin, grey, and crazy fellow, such as I have described him, everybody saying, "See what the sharpest wits may come to!"

When he was dead, little property was found, or debts in his books due to him; there were, however, these singular entries:—

Joe Clay, Dr.		£	s.	d.
To putting out my eye with a stick, at the King of				
Prussia		0	10	6
Sam Argill, Dr.				
To breaking me two fiddlesticks				
		1	1	0

Thus he valued his eyes at exactly two fiddlesticks.

JOCKEY DAWES.

THERE was not a man in all that part of the country who was able to compete in wit with our old friend Dick Redfern, in his best days, but Jockey Dawes—and the jockey has a fame as extensive and enduring as Dick himself. By a jockey, the people of the midland counties, in parlance, do not mean, as the term more usually signifies, a rider at races, but a horse-dealer, a horse-jockey.

Jockey Dawes was a prince and a leader in his profession, and that, as all the world knows, requires a keen wit and cunning. There is no trade in which overreaching is more highly estimated as a science. With this class of men it is a constant battle of intellects. It is always

diamond cut diamond. To be a good horse-jockey a man must, to use their own term, be deep as the north star. To bargain, to banter, to pose by a species of sharp sarcasm and vaunting eloquence, to set stratagem against stratagem, trick against trick, lie against lie—that is the daily business of the jockey. A fair statement of the actual quality of the article, a fair demand for it, those are the very last things which are thought of. The grand triumph and glory of jockeyship is, by well-laid schemes, good selection of customers,—for a jockey sees at a glance whether he has, to use his own phrase, got the right sow by the ear,—by the practice of the most singular arts and artifices, to palm off a worthless beast for a good price, or a good beast for five times its value. Hence all the practices of patching, painting, clipping, trimming, gingering, to cover defects and impose a temporary show of spirit till the bargain is over. It is only a practical eye that knows where to look for what is real, and what is deception ; but that eye will in a moment detect the cleverest deception. The good jockey will coolly lay his finger on the weak point, on the concealed defect, with a quiet smile, as if it was a thing of no great importance,—show up the cheat, and tell, to a penny, the real worth or worthlessness of

the animal. It is the Johnny Raw and the pretender who pay the penalty for dealing in horse-flesh. It is Moses who sells *his* horse, and gets a gross of spectacles in shagreen cases. I have known many who prided themselves on their judgment in such matters, but I scarcely ever knew one man who was not a regular jockey himself, who did not severely suffer for such transactions.

The jockey has a pride and glory in his profession proportioned to the difficulties and scope of imposition. See him riding into a town to a fair, with his long string of steeds all tied head to tail—what a confident, self-satisfied air there is about him, as he jogs on, generally mounted on the most sorry jade in his possession, which you would not think worth a sovereign, but which, if you ventured such a sentiment, he would immediately crack off as a most extraordinary creature. Nay, he will shew the points in the scarecrow as actual indications of breed and beauty; and telling you, if you *be* a judge, you must see that at once, will make you quite ashamed of your ignorance. And then, as to virtues, and special qualities—why, there never was such a horse! How many miles has he actually ridden that *tit* in one day without

drawing bit? How many miles an hour does it trot? What weight has it carried or drawn? and what have said such and such great men of it? Bless us! why it is a fact, Bellerophon was a dog-tit to that horse! And with that he gives the jade a coaxing slap on the chest, with a—"What, they'd run thee down, old Bob, eh? They'd make us believe that thou'rt fit for nothing but the dog-kennel, eh? But let 'em show us a tit that can clear the ground like thee yet. No, no, thy best days are to come yet. Thou'rt none of their flip-flap, wishy-washy bits of Arabians, that can be slipped out of their dandy wrappers and run over the course for ten minutes, and then into their jackets again, and all covered and cordialled and coddled up like a sick child or an old woman with the ague. No, Bob; no, lad, thou'rt all fair and above board, rough and ready, all steel and pin-wire, and wilt be jogging on thy ten miles an hour when many a showier thing is not fit to draw a babies' cart." And then he gives him a cut with his long whip, and makes him start and prance, crying—"See! what, he's no spirit left, has he? Isn't that action? What d'ye call that?"

See the jockey thus on the pavement of the fair, in his long coat, his old boots, his great

jockey whip, his hat that has no shape that mortal terms can describe—brown, slouching, without either roundness or squareness, corners or edges about it; and his stout waistcoat with its double rows of great buttons; see his ruddy, sun-burnt face, and how he plants his leg, and puts out his hand as he is in the midst of his bargain—why, he would not thank the Queen to be his mother—he is a clever jockey—a rare hand at a raffle, and that is, in his eyes, the summit of all existence.

And what a thing is a jockey's bargain! He would scorn to set a fair price on a horse, and sell it at once and quietly. There is no fun in that. No, even when he knows that his customer is up to the thing; knows the worth of it as well as he does, he'll ask at least a fourth more than he means to take, that he may have a chance, by the force of his palaver, to take in the knowing one a bit. It is at least the way to shew his wit, his knowledge; to enjoy the luxury of a good hard fight. He is all tongue, all eyes, all ears. He has half-a-dozen bargains on the *tapis* at once, though he seems to be absorbed body and soul in an eager endeavour to convince some one person of the superlative qualities of some particular steeds; though all the while he is perhaps well satisfied that he shall not sell

those very horses to this particular man ; that the bidding is only to show off on the other side. And truly, a pretty contradiction of terms do they have about the same horse. The owner has not words to express his astonishment at the wonderful beauties of the creature. What a chest ! what shapely buttocks ! what an eye ! what a beautiful head ! what a set of handsome legs and neat feet ! what fire and action he has ! according to one,—and according to the other, what a joulter head ! what a pig back and bony hips ! what incipient spavins, tetters, and glanders ! He is, according to the bidder, liable to all sorts of diseases, colics, coughs, staggers, and heaven knows what. You wonder what he can want such a horse for. By his account it is too bad even for the dogs. But while the heat of contest goes on about this sorely praised and abused steed, the eye of the jockey is secretly aware of three or four other parties, that he knows are more likely to purchase, and far more easy to be taken in. Suddenly, he turns to a quiet, clergyman-like sort of a person, and says—“That’s a capital horse now, if you wanted one for a gig—sure-footed as the sun himself—goes like the wind, and is only rising four years old. He’s been run for a year by Sir Toby Blaze, who would not have taken two hundred pounds for him, but Sir Toby was a little

run out at the elbows, I reckon, and is off to France. I can let you have that a bargain;—all right and tight,—you'll never have the chance again."

"What's the price?"

"Price!—dog cheap—a mere old song. Seventy pounds."

The clergyman-like, mild gentleman, shakes his head, and is walking away.

"What *will* you give then, master? Name *your* price. I might possibly come down a trifle or so, to do business."

"I don't want a horse at more than fifty pounds," says the mild gentleman, softly.

"Fifty! oh, I can let you have a dozen at that price, at forty, thirty, ay, twenty-five, if you will. See here! and here! But take my advice now, that *is* a bargain! that *is* a horse! I tell you it is as well worth two hundred pounds to a gentleman, as a penny loaf is worth a penny. But to make short on it, I'll say, sixty-five! There! what do you say then?"

"Say forty, Jem!" says an equally sharp-looking fellow of the same genus, "and let the gentleman go; you see he wants to be going to his dinner. Say forty; that's the real value of the tit. I'll bid for him, come, done!"

"Forty? forty devils! Do you think, Houn-

dell, that I steal my horses? or take the dog-flesh of the cavalry? No, the very least penny I'll take is sixty-three! Ah, neighbour!" says he, suddenly bustling away to a farmerly-looking man, who is eyeing a pair of black colts—"Ah! you've some white in your eye, I see. You know a bit of good stuff when you see it, as well as any of your fathers did when they'd a mind to go a courting. Come, these will turn up your leas in style, and they're yours for a fig's end—just five-and-thirty pounds apiece! What! don't that please you?" as the old farmer looks at him with a sly, roguish smile. "What's the matter now? Are horses of that stamp so thick on the ground here? Just look about you while I settle with this clergyman; and mind nobody whips the colts off before you can open your mouth."

"Forty pounds!" says the man who bids as if self-appointed, for the clergyman-like gentleman. "Forty pounds, no more. There is the brass—" holding out a lot of bank notes.

"Forty crabsticks!"

"Forty! and not a bodle more!"

"Well then, it's of no use talking. Ah! squire, that hunter will carry like a whirlwind this next season. There's bone and sinew! There's figure and action! Put that horse out, Tom, show his paces," and the horse gets a cut behind,

and is rattled over the stones at a rate that makes the fire fly from his shoes and the people out of his way in a jiffey.

But not to follow all the bargaining with the squire; the jockey is now all vociferation with the farmer for the black colts, and as he huffs away from him and his offer—

“Forty pounds, Jem!” says again the knowing fellow who is waiting beside the clergyman-like gentleman. “Forty! that’s the very last word.”

“Sixty, Houndell! sixty, man! I won’t take a penny less if I must keep the horse till doomsday.”

And away go the knowing one and the mild gentleman, looking through the rest of the horse-fair. But, half an hour afterwards, you see them there again; and, spite of having vowed twenty times that he won’t say another word, and the other protesting that this and that is the very last penny that he’ll take—they are now got to forty-four and forty-six! But here it hangs just as stiffly, and the fight is as hard, and the bargain seems as hopeless. In fact, away go the knowing one and the mild gentleman, as if for the last time, and in amaze at the jockey’s obstinacy; but after some quarter of an hour, as they *accidentally* pass again, the knowing one shouts—

“What! that famous horse is still hanging on hand! Well, Jem, I’m still your man. I’ll stand forty-four, now then—now or never!”—He is going—”

“Forty-five! Come, things are deuced slack to-day—there! take him—I lose twenty pounds by him, if I lose a penny.”

“Forty-four!” says the knowing one—“that’s the price—here it is, see—Bank of England—forty-four!”

“Well, forty-four then, and ten shillings for luck. There! there!”

“Well, I won’t be hard,—forty-four and *five* shillings for luck.”

Here most people would think the matter pretty well at an end. But no such thing! If he were to pass a quarter of an hour afterwards, he would probably find them still hard at it for a split of the five shillings, or finally, whether the halter shall go with the horse.

The bargain made, the mild clergyman-like man pays down the money, and gives the knowing one a sovereign for his friendly, but unsolicited assistance; at which he looks with a smile, turning it over in the palm of his hand, and adding, “A trifle more, sir, should it not be? Why, bless me, it’s four hours that we’ve been higgling with that whitleather chap; a five pound note

wouldn't, I think, be too heavy. Think what I've saved you! Here's a horse worth two hundred; nay, I won't say with Jem, worth *quite* two hundred pounds, but honestly worth one, and that for forty-four pound five!"

The mild man gives the knowing one a couple of sovereigns, and his groom rides the horse home, where, in a month's time, they find that the creature is regularly *made up*; has a confirmed spavin, a touch in the wind, is subject to run away with the bit between his teeth, and, in short, is not worth a bunch of matches;—the good-natured knowing one having been the jockey's accomplice.

Such is the strange trade of jockeys, amongst whom Jockey Dawes stood pre-eminent. In all the mysteries of making up, setting off, bargaining and buying, he stood unrivalled. He was known at all the fairs far round, but in his own neighbourhood he was a very byword for cunning and invincible fence of wit. Nay, his fame seems to have reached the poet Tennyson, for in his poem—"Walking to the Mail," we find his name:—

But let him go; his devil goes with him,
As well as with his tenant, Jockey Dawes.

In his youth he acquired great fame all amongst his class, and all over his own part of the

country, for a trial about the sale of a horse, which he won. He had sold a capital-looking grey horse at a great price as a right, sound, healthy, and useful dark grey horse. The purchaser found, as soon as he got home, that the horse was stone blind, though it was difficult to discover this by the look of his eyes. He sent it back, but Jockey Dawes refused to take it, saying he had sold it for a blind one. The purchaser denied this: the thing came to trial, where Dawes stoutly declared he had sold it for a blind one; that his very warranty was that he was "a right sound, healthy, and *dark* grey horse;" at which, the court being very much enlightened, and the jury very much convulsed with laughter, a verdict was given at once for Jockey Dawes; and his "*dark* grey horse" became proverbial. Well might Dr. Johnson, in his dictionary, define a jockey to be "a man that deals in horses; a cheat, a trickish fellow.'

This worthy, as is often the case with this genus, kept a public-house. It stood near Langley Mill, on the edge of Derbyshire, and, of course, great was the resort to his tap, when he was at home, and many the merry contests between the jockey and Dick Redfern. Dick was all lightness, thinness, and volatile, flashing merriment. The jockey, short, stout, and somewhat pursy, with a cool, sly man-

ner, a quiet, meaning smile, and pleasant inward chuckle. The stories of his feats are endless in the traditions of his neighbourhood; but we can only give a specimen.

Two raw fellows of the Peak of Derbyshire plagued the jockey for a couple of very cheap horses, for the work of a very poor little farm. It was at a fair at Chesterfield. Jockey Dawes told them he had no such cattle; but, as if he could make them at will, they still continued to bore him for them. At length, as he saw that they were, according to the rhyme of the country,—

“ True Peakeril bred,
Strong i’ th’ arm and weak i’ th’ head,”

he said—“ Well, well, come to my house. I’ve two tits there that will suit you to a hair. Two capital horses they are, though a trifle worse for wear; but all sound as timber and paint; sound wind, limb, and eye-sight. Hard as bricks they are; they’ll just suit your cold country. I call them Whisk and Bob. Come then, and I’ll sell you them both for a guinea.”

The fellows caught eagerly at the idea—two horses, all sound as timber and paint, for a guinea! They set off the next day, and walked there. It was at least twenty miles. Jockey Dawes, who was sitting in great glory in his snug fireside nook,

on a cold April day, saw the fellows coming up his yard, and put the neighbours, who were drinking in his house, up to the matter. He bade the Peakerils come in, take a seat, and a cup of ale, and then he would show them the horses, and insisted they should be the capital pair he had promised them—Whisk and Bob,—and no other.

“Whisk and Bob!” exclaimed the men who were drinking,—“why, Mester, will you sell *them*? They go like the wind, and can live on the wind,—they are famous horses, and are cheap at any money.”

The Peakerils could hardly sit for impatience; they insisted on seeing the horses directly; when the jockey, going out to the door, pointed to the sign which hung in front of the house, and said—“There they are:—there go Whisk and Bob; one black, the other bay, one on each side. They are dog cheap, but I stick to my word—they are yours for a guinea.”

At this discovery the fellows grew outrageous, and threatened law and vengeance; but the jockey, amid the laughter of his neighbours, told them to go home like two fools as they were, to bother a man to sell that he had not, and then to walk twenty miles to buy two horses for a guinea.

Another country fellow pressed him as impor-

unately to buy his horse, when he told him that he had spent all his money, and could buy no more that day; but the man still went on asking him to buy. "Well then," said the jockey, "if I buy it, I shall give thee my note to pay thee in a fortnight." The bargain was made and the note given, and in a fortnight the fellow walked into the jockey's house, and presented his note.

"All right," said the jockey, "all quite right—I'll pay thee in a fortnight."

"In a fortnight!" said the man; it's due now; it's a fortnight since you gave me this note."

"To be sure," said the jockey, "quite true; come again in a fortnight; I'll pay thee in a fortnight."

The man departed in high dudgeon, and punctually at the fortnight's end appeared again.

"Well, now then, you'll please to pay your note."

"Let me see it;" said the jockey. "Oh yes, in a fortnight;—I'll certainly pay it then,—that's what it says."

"Says! yes,—but I'll tell you now it's two fortnights since you ought to have paid it; and if you don't pay it now, I'll take measures to make you."

"Oh!" said the jockey, "there's no need of

that; come again in a fortnight, and it shall be paid."

The fellow, who was now past all patience, hurried off, breathing fire and fury, and in that humour, to his lawyer, telling him what had passed; but to his surprise, no sooner did the lawyer set eyes on the note than he burst into a violent fit of laughter. "Why," said he, "you may go for ever; there is no date to the note, and it will be a promise to pay in a fortnight, to the end of time!"

The man, who had so little scholarship as never to have perceived this, was confounded, but the lawyer soon helped him out of his dilemma. "Go," said he, to the jockey; "but take a friend with you. Let your friend go in some time first, and be taking his glass when you arrive; and, when you enter, take care not to recognise him. Present your note, and when the jockey says he will pay in a fortnight, call your friend to witness the promise."

The man followed his advice, and as soon as he called on his friend to mark the jockey's words—Jockey Dawes gave a knowing look, chuckled to himself, and said to the fellow,—“Oho! so thou hast been to thy mother, has thou? Here, here is thy money, and another time, don't bore peo-

ple who don't want to buy; and get cut for the simples before thou takes promissory notes without dates again."

Dead though Jockey Dawes has been this half century, yet his fame is strong as ever in its locality, and before the door of his old house still swing on each side of the sign the two renowned horses that live on the wind—the immortal Whisk and Bob—sound as timber and paint.

SAMPSON HOOKS

AND

HIS MAN JOE LING.

As I have said, before my day all the old race of the village and neighbourhood—all those who made the staple talk of the older people—old Squire Fletcher, old Kester Colclough, Bill Newton, Jack Shelton, and the rest, had passed away, and we saw the last of all the tribe, once the sun of mirth to the whole circle, like many another sun of the same kind, burnt out and laid, after having been long sorely torn and gnawed by Melancholy, as if she owed him a grudge for having chased her for so many years from so many hearts, the wasted victim of this Melancholy—in his narrow house. Sampson

Hooks, and his man Joe Ling, were now figuring on the scene in a very different fashion. But before we proceed to paint them more at large, we must pause a moment to sketch some traits of a mighty revolution in this country, of which thousands and tens of thousands are now daily feeling the effect, and of which thousands have no adequate conception, and few or none of those who have, have yet adequately described.

It is a fact that, within the last two hundred years, almost every acre of land in this country, except the large entailed estates of the aristocracy, has quite changed hands. There is quite a different race and class of men now living on all the small possessions of land, or on what has been formed out of those small possessions; but the greatest and most rapid and striking alterations of this kind have taken place within the last fifty years. The French Revolution, in fact, introduced an English Revolution which, if it did not shed so much blood on the British soil, thoroughly altered the title and holding of property, and pressed the blood as perfectly out of thousands of oppressed hearts.

That possession of small portions of land by the people, which now so strikingly distinguishes the people of the Continent from those of England—which makes, indeed, poverty so dif-

ferent a thing there and here—would seem at one time to have been almost as general here as anywhere. If we still go into really old-fashioned districts—into those which the modern changes have not yet reached, where there are no manufacturers—into the obscure and totally agricultural nooks—we see evidences of a most ancient order of things. The cottage, the farmhouse, the very halls are old; the trees are old; the hedges are old; everything is old. There is nothing that indicates change or progress. There is nothing, even in furniture, that may not have been there at least five hundred years; there is much that induces you to believe that eight hundred years ago it existed. In common labourers' cottages,—before the late rage for old English furniture, which led the London brokers to scour the whole empire, penetrate into every nook, and buy up all the old cabinets, hall tables, old carved chairs, carved presses and wardrobes, and retail them for five hundred per cent., besides importing great quantities of similar articles from Holland, Belgium, and Germany,—I have myself seen old, heavy, ample arm-chairs, with pointed backs, in which one might imagine an Alfred or an Edward the Confessor sitting, with the date in great letters on their backs, of 1300 or 1400. There are plenty of houses so

ancient, that in the roofs and woodwork the ends of the great wooden pegs with which their framing is pinned together are not cut off. But without, how old is everything! The trees are dead at top and hollow at heart; there are ancient elms and oaks standing, whose shadow is said to have covered its acre of ground, but which have now neither head nor heart; huge hollow shells, so capacious, that whole troops of children play in them, and call them their churches: and whole flocks of sheep or herds of cattle seek shelter from the summer sun in them. These old villages, too, are lost, as it were, in a wilderness of ancient orchards, where the trees produce apples and pears totally unlike any now grown in modern plantings. The villages are surrounded by a maze of little crofts, whose hedges have evidently never been set out in any general enclosure, for they do not run in regular squares and straight lines, but form all imaginable figures, and, with the true line of beauty, go waving and sweeping about in all directions. They are manifestly the effect of gradual and fitful inclosure from the forest in far-off times, many of them long before the Conquest, when this dense thicket and that group of trees were run up to and included as part of the fencing. These old hedges have often a

monstrous width, occupying nearly as much in their aggregate amount as the aggregate amount of the enclosed land itself. They are often complete wildernesses of stony mounds, bushes, and rank vegetation. The hawthorns of which they are composed are no longer bushes, but old and wide-spreading trees, with great gaps and spaces often between them, having ceased to be actual fences between the old pastures, and become only most picturesque shades for the cattle. In the old crofts still flourish the native daffodils, and the snow-white and pink primroses, now extirpated by the gathering for gardens, everywhere else.

Such, there is no doubt, were our villages generally, all over the country, formerly, and for at least a thousand years. The whole country seemed to lie in a long and sunny dream. So little did population seem to increase, that rarely a house was built. The army and the distant towns took up the small surplus of people that appeared. So little did land seem wanted, that the forests and wastes lay from age to age unchanged. Every man had his little plot, or could enclose it for a small annual acknowledgment, and the rural race lived on, with little exertion and no care.

The first shock to this state of things was the

Reformation. The breaking-up of the monasteries at once turned on the country a vast number of monks and nuns, nearly destitute of means of existence ; and a still vaster number of poor people, who had to be supported on the third of the church revenues, given expressly for the poor. These, suddenly deprived of all other resources, were converted into a monstrous mass of beggars and thieves, that overran, from the days of Henry VIII. to those of Elizabeth, the whole land, and bade defiance to constables, stocks, and gallows. Never were there such swarms of misery and vice and terror known in England, even in the fiercest heat of the civil wars. Henry himself hanged, of these wretches, his thousands annually, without at all sensibly diminishing the misery or the terror. This, however, was only the pressure on one side of the case : that on the other was as great. The people—greedy courtiers, gamblers, commissioners, and speculators, who got hold, by a variety of means, but seldom by any honest ones, of the church and abbey lands, rose, or wished to rise, into the ranks of the aristocracy. They would have their halls, their parks, their chases ; their children would no longer follow trades : they, too, must be provided with land ; and hence came the growing jealousy of all encroachments

by the poor on waste lands—nay, the violent disposition to encroach, on one plea or another, on the small proprietor. Then, in fact, began those scenes so well described by Goldsmith in his “Deserted Village.” Every one of these *novi homines* would have an establishment like the ancient aristocracy.

“ The man of wealth and pride
Takes up a space that many poor supplied ;
Space for his lake, his park’s extended bounds,
Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds ;
The robe that wraps his limbs in silken aloth
Has robbed the neighbouring fields of half their growth ;
His seat, where solitary sports are seen,
Indignant spurns the cottage from the green.”

But when we had discovered and civilized new countries, so far from giving relief in this respect, the mischief was rapidly augmented. Those who emigrated were chiefly those who had no land here ; those who stayed were those who had it and wanted more. With colonization and improvement, manufactures increased, and this gave additional population and higher value to land. The story of Auburn was acted over and over, more frequently, every succeeding generation. But after the French Revolution broke out, and the flames of war spread all over Europe, *then* how did this system progress at home ! Every inch of land became a lump of gold. Forests

and wastes were inclosed, but went only to the rich. The selfish absurdity by which the rich managed to claim every inch of waste land, on the plea that it had been held by feudal tenure from the days of the Conqueror, and therefore belonged to the lord of the manor, came richly into play: as if by their pieces of parchment these men could justly hold in fee all England; as if they had not, by ages of neglect and non-occupation, forfeited every pretended title that they once might have had to wastes that never had been delved or ploughed since the days of Adam. But this was recognised by the rich as law for the rich; and "unto him that had was given, and from him that had not was taken away even that which he had,"—the custom of turning his cow and his geese upon the waste.

Well: it had been tolerable had the mischief stopped here; but it did not. Such was the value of land, and such the numbers who had made money by trade, by manufactures, by government contracts, etc. etc., that the pressure on the small proprietors became like an overwhelming flood, and in a great measure swept them from the face of the earth, and English poverty became what we see it now—the most frightful poverty in existence. The poverty of the Continent is the poverty of men who have

all their little portions of land, and nothing more. They and theirs, by industry, can, with frugality, live on this land. It is a constant support, a constant sheet-anchor; and, though they have *poverty* they have *no fear*. That horrible condition of total destitution, of total dependence on the employment by others—the total dependence on the labour of their hands—which, when that employment is not given, drops them at once into the bottomless pit of pauperism, and makes the lives of millions one great heart-ache, one great agony of the vultures of *necessity and uncertainty* gnawing at their vitals—is only known in the midst of this land of luxury and unexampled wealth.

With what monstrous strides has this great English Revolution stalked on since the impulse of the French Revolution, which gave a tenfold life to our manufacturing and to all sorts of jobbing and speculation! The men who had made large sums by government contracts, stock-jobbing, lotteries, corn-dealing, and by the legal operations which all these things brought into play, were all looking out for landed investments, especially in old-fashioned places, where land was still cheap; and where, therefore, a large tract could be purchased for a trifle, and a great house be built, and a park laid out. In many

cases, nay, in few, could these swelling fellows find a piece of earth large enough for them, and soon began to cast greedy eyes on all the little enclosures around them; and in a wonderfully short space of time did their Aaron's rod of money manage to swallow up all the rods and roods of their lesser neighbours. Oh, many a piteous tale of huge oppression, chicanery and violent or treacherous wrong, could the history of these things unfold!

The little proprietors were, like the ancient Danites, men who had lived on with much ease and little knowledge. They knew little of the arts of life. They knew little of lawyers and of mortgages and foreclosings. What little town is there yet, of four or five thousand inhabitants, which does not still possess its people who can remember when it could maintain but *one* lawyer, and who, by-the-bye, was half starved? But the moment there came another, both flourished, and now there is a perfect swarm. There needs no other evidence of rapid change of property, by fair and foul means, by one thing and another, and nothing more than the growing pride and lust of accumulation and rascality of the age has effected. There are plenty of people who can well enough remember the old dormant, the old petrified state of things, and know the time

when scarcely a drop of tea was drunk in the village; who know what a stir the introduction of umbrellas made; how effeminate they were deemed; how the men marched about in whole days' rains, in oilskin-covered hats and caps; and women even rode long journeys on pillions and in oilskin hoods. There are plenty who recollect the introduction of parasols, and how the old people contemptuously called them "cabbage-leaves." "There go the women with their cabbage-leaves hoisted, as if the sun would make them worse favoured than their mothers were."

But of all the new-fangled introductions, none has been so sweeping as that frightful legerdemain by which the old cottages have vanished—whole hamlets of them—to make room for solitary ponds, and parks, and long, winding carriage approaches to them, by which the common and the very village green have been swallowed up; by which all the old hedges of a thousand years have been stubbed up—the old trees hurled down, and great gay houses have risen, where once a score of thatched cottages covered as many contented families. Some of the acts by which this laying of field to field and house to house have been managed, we may trace in the story of Sampson Hooks, and his man Joe Ling.

The village of old Squire Fletcher and Dick

Redfern was exactly one of the old-world kind, of which I have spoken. In their day, no single change had come. No manufacture was carried on there, and none of the new species of honey-laden bees—the stock-jobber, the great London soap-boiler, or sugar-baker, the war-contractor, the great spinner who had spun a golden cone around him of a most marvellous size, nor the lawyer who had fattened on each and all of them—had yet found their way thither, with a desire to suck good mouthfuls from the simple inhabitants, and to build their gaudy nests on the old hereditary lands.

Where Hooks sprung from, and of what he had been, I am utterly ignorant; one thing, however, is certain, that, though the race of phrenologists had not arisen to proclaim the fact, he had the organs of acquisitiveness and constructiveness very large. He purchased the house and lands of old Squire Fletcher, who died without issue; and, as the place was considered so out of the way, purchased it for what is called “an old song;” that is, he purchased it at what a host of such estates had been got for, before the days when there was such a sharp look-out for eligible investments—a price which the mere thinnings out of the timber at once paid for.

The old hall was what is called an old, rambling

place. It was low, with low rooms, every one of which had a step up or a step down into it. The buildings, stables, kennels, barns, and so forth, occupied a much larger space than the house itself, and the whole set of premises were buried in a perfect wood of gigantic trees, especially elms and walnuts, and around lay a multiplicity of little fields, with great, tall, wild hedges, and huge hedge-row trees.

What light did Sampson Hooks speedily let into it! First, down toppled the great trees, which, as we have said, were doomed to pay for the house and lands. Then, down went whole troops of others, to build up the new house. Well do I remember when those fine elms, and the rows and avenues of limes, strewn the ground; and what fine fun we found it to play at Robin Hood and his merry men, with cross-bows and tobacco-pipe bolts, amongst their arching boughs! Then, as rapidly disappeared scores of lines of old hedges; and what had been so shortly before a labyrinth of little crofts, opened itself into a fair lawn, and God wot, a great park! Then came a fine fellow, a landscape-gardener and layer-out of grounds, and before his magic touch the old garden, with its clipped yew-hedges and pleached alleys, disappeared. A lofty wall enclosed a much larger space, and shut out the

whole view of the place from the village. Great iron gates reared themselves here and there, through which alone the passer-by could catch a glimpse of what used to lie open pleasantly to the view of every one. Woods and hedge-row trees danced, as it were, into shape, as groups and single spreading trees. A lofty new hall, with stone vases on the top, exalted itself above the highest trees, and sunk fences, and winding gravel walks, and glittering greenhouses, and pleasant fountains, made a wonderful spot of it. One thing, however, the villagers took notice of: the bees fled out of their hives when the old garden was destroyed, and the rooks out of their favourite wood just by; and this, they declared, boded no good. Fresh bees were purchased, and seemed to do tolerably well, but never could they lure the rooks back, though they tied wisps of straw and artificial nests, for several successive springs, in the trees.

Every trace of old Squire Fletcher was obliterated, but the village remained the same—nay, as it seemed, only the more doggedly, for the dislike felt to the changes at the hall. All round the village was a wilderness of crofts and great wild hedges, with their ~~thatched~~ cottages and old, ample, weedy gardens, such as I have above alluded to. Scarcely a new house, or even a new

piece of wall, was to be seen in the whole hamlet : every family was just where it had been for generations ; but Sampson Hooks had his eye upon it, and it was doomed to feel the effect of his necromantic power.

I remember him well—a large, stately-looking man, riding on a large old roadster. No one could say that he was a violent and arbitrary, or tyrannical person ; on the contrary, he was particularly polite to all his neighbours, very mild, and ready to enquire, as he met his poor neighbours on the road, how they all and their families went on, and to offer them his advice, not officiously, but with the utmost suavity, for the better management of their land. His wife, too, everybody declared to be a perfect lady ; so graceful, so smiling, so kind to every one, at least in words, and often in little attentions when ill, and wonderful for her admiration and bland affection for her dear Sampson Hooks. But, as mildness is proverbially insinuating, so it was soon seen that, by some means or other, Sampson Hooks had obtained possession of this cottage and that croft, which had been in the same family for ages. People wondered how it was that their neighbours should sell the property of their fathers to a stranger ; but it was, in fact, no wonder in itself. Plenty of these neighbours

had been living on their little estates without any thought or exertion more than was practised by the bird that lived in their old hedges, or the owls in their barns. Their fields were ploughed up to give corn enough for bread, and their cows grazed in pastures that never knew what improvement was. They were, on the contrary, overgrown with hillocks which once had been thrown up by the moles, but so long ago that they were now covered with a turf as thick as the rest of the field, and had been increased by ants or somewhat else, till many of them were big enough to fill a good wheelbarrow. Then, for long tufts of yellow ragwort, for tall crops of thistles and rushes and bushes, they were actual wildernesses, and their cows had sometimes been known to be so hidden and lost in them, that their owners had ran all over the parish to seek them, while they were quietly chewing their cuds in some jungle of thistle or furze in their own pastures.

Such were the Newtons, the three sons of old Bill Newton, and such were their fields. There was young Bill, and Tom, and Ned. Young Bill was so called though he was now near fifty, and had sons growing up. He was the bell-ringer; Tom, the village butcher, and Ned the village sleeper, if he were anything. Such things

as management or industry they had no conception of. To live and enjoy themselves was all they thought of; but, unfortunately, they had each of them only a third part of what their father had had for that purpose. But they lived in true gospel order, taking no thought for to-morrow. They had been known to kill a pig and never give over feasting till the whole was eaten up; and to brew, yet never have any occasion to tun, for they drank the liquor out of the tubs while it was working.

To such people, what so tempting as offered money? Sampson Hooks saw that their cow-houses and pig-sties were in bad repair, and kindly advised them to put them in order. They naïvely asked,—where the money was to come from? Oh, there was no difficulty about that; he would most willingly lend them such a trifle for the sake of seeing the village look respectable. That was very kind, thought they. They gladly accepted it; nothing was asked of them but to put their names to an acknowledgment. They did that at once; but it was a much easier thing for them to borrow than to pay again. The day for the annual interest arrived. They scratched their heads, but had not just then the money. No matter, it might stand: they would be able to pay when the crops came in. But the

crops came in and they had nothing to sell, none to spare; there would be but just enough for the family. They were short even of seed. Their fences were bad, and their neighbours' cattle got in and ate their corn while it was green, and trampled half of it down. Oh, well—they need not distress themselves; they might have some money for seed and for fencing, and then, as their crops would be better, they could pay. They were glad to hear it; it really was very kind, and very pleasant to have money for everything so easily. They lived like fighting-cocks. The gentleman had plenty; it would be long before he wanted it, and before then *something* would turn up. So they went on, the Newtons and others. Why had they not gone on so long before? Because their neighbours themselves had had no money to tempt their neighbours with, and possessed that sort of simple consciences that they had a horror of coveting their neighbours' goods.

Nobody could be more forbearing, more considerate, more kind, than good Sampson Hooks; he never asked them for the money nor for the interest; on the contrary, he always had a smile and a nod for them when he met them; stopped his great lofty roadster, and asked how they all went on.

But, in a while, there came riding into the village a singular little fellow, on a little yellowish pony, with whitish legs, and a face white all on one side. The man was a little, lean man, yet with a considerable paunch, as if all his food turned into fat there. He wore an old hat, particularly sun-burnt and slouching in the brim; an old blue coat with metal buttons; a waistcoat that folded over and buttoned across the front of a tawny kind of checked stuff; a blue-spotted cotton handkerchief; corduroy small clothes, and old fustian gaiters, well splashed with the roads—the roads then were abominable. His horse was also splashed up to the sides, and he urged him on by the constant use of one old jingling spur. There was a still, close look, in the solid ruddy face and small black eyes, nearly lost under the slouching hat-brim of this little man; and the little horse had also a look as if he would be always going just the way that his rider did not wish him, for which he got incessant jerks in the mouth with the bridle, kicks with the one spur, and thumps on the flank with a tough and heavy ash plant.

This man, who was destined to be well known in that village, rode up to the door of Bill Newton, tied his horse to the hook in the wall, and,

walking in with one hand on his stick, as a staff, and the other in his breeches pocket, with a sort of stealthy and unsteady gait, announced himself as Joe Ling, the bailiff of Mr. Sampson Hooks.

He said, that as he put Mr. Hooks' accounts in order, he had found two or three trifles which related to him, Bill Newton. He did not want to hurry him. Mr. Hooks hurried nobody—in fact, he was such a man, that if he, Joe Ling, did not take care of things a little, he would soon be like the child that gave away his breakfast because another cried for it, and then had to cry itself. Never was there such a good-natured, careless fellow. He had put these little matters together, and if it was not convenient to pay just then, why he, Bill Newton, could put his name to a bit of paper which he had brought with him, and which he presented. Bill Newton, who, of course, could not pay, and did not like the looks of this fellow half as well as those of Sampson Hooks, told Joe Ling that he had no doubt but that it was all right, and that he would see Mr. Hooks himself about it. To his great mortification, he then found that Joe Ling was as deaf as a door-nail, and that he could do nothing at all with him. He only answered quite beside the

mark ; as, " Yes, it really was fine weather :"
" No, there was really no hurry at all ; he had only to sign that bit of paper."

Bill Newton shouted into the man's ears that he could not sign it,—he would see Mr. Hooks about it.

" Oh, very well, I can wait a little ; I did not know you were busy ; don't let me disturb you : I can wait !"

He clapped himself down in an old arm-chair, poked the children on the hearth in the ribs with his stick, as they lay there staring at him, and, making a low chuckling sort of half-laugh, half-wheezing, added, " Oh no ; no hurry at all !"

Bill tried again to drive his meaning into him ; it was hopeless. He only replied, " Oh yes, he was sure the amount was cast up right ; but he could take his time, and look it over. He had only to put his name where he had shewn him."

Bill, then, making a sort of funnel of his hands, put them to his ear, and shouted into it that he had to go out, and bid him good morning. " Oh, yes," said Ling, " Mr. Hooks is an uncommon good-natured man : everybody knows that !"

Bill Newton went out ; and Ling, waiting for some time, took a stroll into some of the neighbours' houses on the like errand, leaving his horse at Bill's door. Three hours afterwards, at

dinner-time, Bill returned, and saw, to his desperate vexation, the fellow's pony still hanging at his door ; and scarcely was he himself within, where the pudding was already smoking on the table, than in walked Joe Ling, and on Bill's saying that he had no occasion to wait, he replied, " Why, yes, he would take a bit of dinner with them, for waiting so long had made him hungry." Without ceremony he drew a chair, helped himself liberally to the pudding, and talked on of Mr. Hooks, and all his good-nature, and what a heap of concerns he had on his hands in the village he himself (that is, Ling) came from, till Bill Newton wished him at Jamaica. But Joe Ling was in no hurry to be off, either to Jamaica or anywhere else. He sate, ate, drank, joked with the wife, poked the children in the ribs, and made himself very much at home. Bill Newton's choler began to rise, for the Newtons were a very choleric family, and he thought several times of knocking the impudent fellow off his seat ; but he remembered Sampson Hooks, and the debt, and restrained himself. But he ate his dinner sullenly ; and with the disappearance of the last mouthful strolled out of the house, and betook himself to the King of Prussia. Here, with his cup before him, but boiling with wrath, he despatched a little lad

several times to see whether Ling's pony still hung at his door. He returned every time with the same tale—it was still there. Roused to a pitch of fury, he started up, and hastened down the village with murderous thoughts in his mind, when, to his very agreeable surprise, he saw his door, but no pony there. He wheeled round, and, once more regaining the public-house, spent the evening there in endeavouring to drown his chagrin in the company of the jolly frequenters of the old house. What was his surprise, however, at ten o'clock at night, to find, as he entered his cottage, Joe Ling comfortably ensconced in the old arm-chair, and the pony well suppered up in the stable!

“Thou'st kept me long, my lad; thou'st kept me long. I did not know that thou meant to pay all up this time; but well and good; I can stay till morning—it will never do to venture home, on such roads, in the dark. I've got my night-cap, luckily, and ony bit of a bed will do for me.”

Bill paused for a moment, considering whether he should not pound him to a jelly with his own ash sapling; but another thought occurred to him: he whispered to his son Jem, and betook himself, without wasting another word on Ling, to bed.

This son Jem made signs to Ling to follow him, took him into his room, and made signs to him that he must make shift with half *his* bed. Joe Ling nodded his approbation, adding, as if to himself, "Half a loaf is better than no bread."

He was soon between the sheets, when, to his astonishment, Jem Newton, a great brawny fellow, heaped a great pile of malt-bags on the bed, and crept under them himself.

"What's that?" said Joe Ling, half crushed and half smothered. "What does the lad mean? Why, man, this mountain would crush a horse's ribs in, and swelter him to death:" upon which he began to fling them off. But in this process he was interrupted by Jem, with a knock on the chest, followed by another on the nose, and a loud outcry of "What does the fellow mean? If you will lie wi' me, you mun lie as I do. I've gotten th' ague, I tell you, and mun ha' my bags on me!"

Ling, who found that he had got a terrible fellow to deal with, ducked down quietly, but with many a groan and many a sigh did he bear his mountainous burthen till the daylight began to peep, when, springing up, he saw that the young rogue had laid all the bags on his (Ling's side,) and had been sleeping most comfortably

himself with the usual quantity of sheets and blankets on him. Ling soon descended, and appeared again at breakfast-time with a note from Sampson Hooks, who begged in most courteous terms that Bill Newton would just sign the trifling account which his bailiff had brought. "He was a good soul, was Ling, but a perfect formalist in business. He would oblige him by signing, and letting him go about his affairs. All would be right; there was no occasion in the world for hurry."

Bill signed his name to be rid of the fellow himself. This was the first appearance of Joe Ling, but it was a sample of what they would find him. On all occasions he was just as deaf, and just as invariably imperturbable. He always lauded the good-nature of Hooks, and Hooks praised him for a thoroughly good fellow, but such a man for business!

So things went on for some years, when, all at once, a regular storm broke out. The Newtons, and many others, found that they actually, drunk or sober, had signed mortgages, and that for sums of such amount as they vowed they had never had. How this was we cannot pretend to tell, but certain it is, that when old Joe Ling met any of these people at the market-town or elsewhere, he was always most civil, treated them

like a king, and on one occasion posted off to Derby in the night, in a great hurry, while he had one of them drunk as a piper at an inn in a neighbouring village, returned before the sun was up, paid him over a sum of money, and saw him sign a deed. Soon after, the man was called upon to evacuate his cottage and fields, according to terms of sale, when he declared he had never made a sale; but found a regular deed drawn out of the pocket of Joe Ling, with his signature there to a certainty, in his own undeniable hand.

In short, never was there such a hubbub! The Newtons, and five or six others, found their mortgages foreclosed, and their little property gone, as in a dream. This man had sold, and did not know when; and the whole place was up and vowing to tear down Sampson Hooks's house about his ears, and murder him and his rascally swindler, Joe Ling.

What did Sampson Hooks? Did he shrink? Did he defy, or even justify? No: he rode through the village daily, calm and smiling, and inquiring into the health and happiness of those he met; and when he met with black and threatening looks, asked, with the greatest and most simple mildness, what was amiss? Had he done anything to offend them?

“Have you done anything?” said indignantly some of the sturdy villagers; “has not your scoundrel man, Ling, robbed and cheated us all? Has not he got almost every man’s property into his clutches? Have we any of us now a home of our own? When was it before that any of us had our houses and fields in debt? And how the devil has the fellow managed to heap up charges against us?”

To this Sampson Hooks replied with a look of surprise, which, if it were feigned, was well feigned; it looked very genuine and very natural.

“Oh! dear,” said he, “it grieves me extremely that you should think that anybody belonging to me should use you unfairly. I am sure my only wish has been to see you comfortable. Have not I lent you money for that purpose? Have not I always advised you to good and prudent management? Oh! dear, this is very unpleasant! But let me be assured that Mr. Ling has done anything unhandsome, and it shall be instantly righted—instantly. High as is my opinion of him, nothing in such a case should screen him. But, my good people, I cannot think, I really cannot think it, indeed. I have seen so much of Joseph Ling, and never could I detect him in any dirty action; on the contrary, he has always

appeared a most innocent, faithful creature ; quite careless of himself—quite ; but his faithful spirit makes him, perhaps, too eager to serve his master. But let all be examined—let all be examined into—and if any wrong be done, let it be righted ; nay, if you can pay off all your debts, or can find any one else to take up your property, willingly will I relinquish it ! Oh ! what good would it do me to win the whole parish, and yet make enemies of all my good neighbours ? Why should I ? Have I not enough ? Have I any one to save for ? Have I child or chick ? Let the thing be searched into—let it be searched into—for this state of matters grieves me, grieves me deeply. Appoint your man, I will send mine, and all shall be set fair and straight between us—quickly ! quickly !”

Sampson Hooks rode away, apparently deeply wounded, and Mrs. Sampson Hooks soon entered some of the cottages of the people to see the sick, and said, “ How sorely her dear Mr. Hooks was afflicted that his neighbours thought so badly of him. Never had she seen him in such a taking ! No rest day nor night—nothing but restless watchfulness ; getting up, lying down, groans and tears. It was but last night,” said she, and the tears rushed to her eyes ; “ I

woke at twelve o'clock, and found him standing by the window, looking out into the moonlight! 'Dear Mr. Hooks,' I exclaimed, 'what *are* you doing? You will be the death of yourself if you do so! Never mind, dear Mr. Hooks, never mind! You have had the best intentions, and if you are hardly thought of, it will only be the lot of all good and tender-hearted people! In this world ye shall have tribulation. But take heart, dear, take heart; all will soon be made right—all will be cleared up.'"

"'Dear Mrs. Hooks,' said my dear Mr. Hooks, with a deep sigh, 'this is a sweet place, —a paradise of a place I may call it; and what pleasure I have had in planning and laying it out! and what a pleasure it was to me to think that here should we live amid a loving people, on whom we might be able to shed blessings! But it cuts me to the heart—it does indeed: and now, sweet as is this spot, I can take no pleasure in it: *that* is all over now, for the charm is gone since I have, through my good intentions, incurred the resentment of my neighbours.'"

Mrs. Hooks was too much affected to proceed, and took her leave weeping, and walked up the village with a heavy and slow step, that touched the tender bosom of every cottage dame who saw it.

"Oh, the villain! Oh, that serpent Ling! What a concern has he made on it! To bring us all, and his Mester and Missis, into all this trouble. Surely they must, after all, be good folks; and it is that old deaf villain that has been making a hand of them and us. But there'll come a storm one of these days, and he must pack, I warrent ye. Out with him—out, I say, with all such serpents!"

The lawyers met; old Joe Ling was there, as well as Sampson Hooks, and all the village concerned, in the parlour of the King of Prussia.

"Let the poor people have every justice, every possible favour," said Mr. Sampson Hooks to his attorney. "Reflect that you are seeking satisfaction for them rather than for me. I want no satisfaction but to see them satisfied."

The examination went on; their own lawyer was keen and subtle, and every now and then said in his heart. "Now old deaf un, now old Ling, thou'lt catch it." But old Ling seemed by no means cast down, nor at all in any eagerness to justify himself; indeed, he seemed not to be capable of understanding that any complaint lay against him. He drew document after document, and book after book, out of his bag, and gave every question its appropriate answer; but

his deafness seemed as complete a coat of defence as the shell of the tortoise. When the opposite lawyer told him that heavy suspicions were entertained of his proceedings, he only replied, "Oh yes, Mr. Hooks was always too good-natured."

As he could not be got at through his ears, they made a direct pass at his eyes in the shape of a piece of paper, on which was written the same conciliatory assertion. Ling read it, then laughed, as at a most capital joke. "Oh dear! oh dear! What nonsense! Who says I've cheated 'em? Who says it? Stuff! Ar'n't all the accounts here? Is not every figure here? Isn't all right cast up? Try, see! try it—try it any one on you! Who says I've cheated 'em? They say! They say, is the first word of a lie! There, cast 'em up, I say; examine 'em ony way yo like, and if yo catch old Joe Ling in a trick, why I'll never eat bread again."

They cast up; they examined; they questioned and cross-questioned, but they could make nothing appear, but that the villagers had been very foolish, and made very bad bargains; and that Joe Ling had made very good ones for his master; but all was regular, most regular. The only thing that stood somewhat in the way of

fair play, was buying the land from the drunken man. But Joe Ling stoutly denied that he was then any more drunk than at any other time.

"Can ony on yo tell me," said he, "when he is right sober, and when he is not? Can ony on yo find him morning, noon, or night, without his pot o' beer? But, what if he has made a bad bargain, now is the time to unbargain it! Hasn't Mr. Hooks said, 'Pay me the money back, and I yield the purchase?'"

Nothing could be fairer. The man was asked if he could get the money somewhere and pay it back. He desired time, and the opposite lawyer offered to find him a man; but somehow the time went over. Two or three people came, saw the land, shook their heads, and went away, and so the matter ended.

The villagers were defeated, though it cannot be said that they were silenced, for they were very savage, and talked in the King of Prussia more fiercely than ever. It was said that the whole was a juggle; that the opposite lawyer had been feed by old Ling; the men who came to see the land that had been sold were sent on purpose by this villain lawyer; and the whole was a hoax and a smoke.

Be that as it may, many years went on. Hooks was as mild as ever—Ling as deaf as

ever. He rode on his yellowish little horse in the very same old hat, old blue coat, spattered gaiters, and jingling spur, as usual, into the village at certain times; and it was observed that after every one of these visits there rose a furious clamour, and many curses and some conspicuous change followed. But it was only when a number of years had passed that the whole change was visible. Then it was seen how many old cottages had actually vanished, how many of the old croft hedges had got stubbed up, and what great wide ploughed fields lay in their places; what numbers of old orchards and gardens were gone. The place, in truth, looked much sprucer, much more open and modern. There were new cottages arisen in long rows, without gardens and pigstyes, it is true; and what was more striking was, that almost all the people were mere labourers without a yard of land, and almost all the land and the village belonged to Sampson Hooks.

What now struck them also as almost as extraordinary was, that not only had the people no longer a foot of land to call their own, but all the old foot-paths which used to run in every possible direction round the village, and away over the fields and commons to the next hamlet, had got stopped up and lost. There had been

no application to the sessions for the purpose, yet the paths which used to give most delicious Sunday and holiday walks to the villagers were, somehow, gone. This had been done by stubbing up a variety of hedges, and ploughing up the land, so that the real direction had been, for a time, lost, especially as the rain made the newly-dug and ploughed-up ground such a perfect slough of mud and wet, that, in winter, it was impassable; and then, when spring came, and the corn sprung up, it was found to be let to some poor fellow that the people could not find in their hearts to do a damage to. But they were very clamorous to Sampson Hooks himself, who always was put into a great flutter of concern at these matters, which he himself never attended to. Mr. Ling should look better to these things, and avoid such complaints. Certainly, the people must have a path. Oh, certainly! But as it would now injure Thomas Hobson's or James Simpson's corn, they would perhaps be so good as to go a little round, or in another direction. Nay, a way should be opened for them through his own park, much nearer, much pleasanter. And this was done. Could anything be more accommodating?

In a few years, however, when the right to the old way was lost, then came that eternal

old Joe Ling and stopped up the new road through the park; such depredations had been committed on the trees in the park, and the hall was so exposed to thieves by these foot-roads so near it, that really they must be closed. But the people *should have a road*. Mr. Hooks would see where it could go to the advantage of all parties. But time went on, and it never *could* be settled where the road should run. Then again rose the choler of the villagers; hatchets and picks were taken, gates were cut down, fences cut through, and the old roads opened with much triumph and jubilee. The whole village was in a ferment, and the women stood at their doors and shouted to each other, and the men in the King of Prussia shouted all at once, "Well, now we shall see what these tyrants will do."

And truly did they soon see that. It was declared that it was very grievous to Mr. Hooks, but that such proceedings could not be allowed; the peace must be preserved, the laws and property must be respected. The offenders were summoned before the justices, and, spite of all their representations, were fined for their outrage, and threatened with the House of Correction; for when did a country magistrate entertain a complaint against the closing of a foot-

path? It is too much to be expected from human nature. Why, this man has these same obnoxious paths on his own lands, and wants to be well rid of them.

So the crofts and cottages were gone, and the foot-paths were all gone, yet not a legal complaint could be exhibited against the virtuous and compassionate Sampson Hooks, nor even against the faithful Joe Ling. Could any man say that they were not really most innocent, falsely-accused, fair-dealing, conscientious, though clever, successful men, as men with money in their pockets usually are, and of which the money itself is a sufficient proof; for, were they not clever, they would never have got it, or would never have kept it when got.

Years rolled on, and all seemed bright and prosperous at the Hall. Neither Sampson Hooks nor his great roadster, Black Jack, seemed to grow a day older. Mrs. Sampson Hooks drove out in her pony-chaise, and smiled and nodded to every one. And old Joe Ling, occasionally, was seen riding to or from the Hall on the same little yellowish horse, with the piebald face and whitish legs; and as to Joe Ling himself, he was just the same figure, and wore the same jingling spur as ever. The old sun-

burnt hat, and the old blue coat with the metal buttons, seemed never to get worse. It was said that Sampson Hooks was making a mint of money in collieries and farming, somewhere a good way off, and that Joe Ling came loaded with money like a bee. If he did, it was not the fruit of the blessings and the prayers of the poor, for never did so many curses roll out of the cottages of the poor as when he rode by. But they might curse, and they did it pretty loudly too—he was deaf to all—and when some surly fellow, or a knot of them in the village-street, has said fiercely out, just as he passed, “The devil fly away with him and his dog-tit too!” he has made his bow. No doubt he saw the fellow’s lips move, for he would reply, “Oh, pretty well, I thank ye, and I hope that you yourselves are all comfortable.”

Spite of all show of prosperity, the villagers noticed that the rooks never came back, and never could be lured to settle in the old trees again, and they nodded knowingly to one another, and said in their broad dialect, “We’ll wait; the dee wull come!”

And truly, in a while there occurred some little matters that did not bear so easily smoothing out, and that made the villagers prick up their

ears, and open their mouths, more confidently than ever; and, what was more singular, in these there was no visible hand of old Joe Ling.

Such was the reputation, at a distance, of the substantial wealth and integrity of Sampson Hooks, that poor people who had saved a little money, could think of no safer means of depositing it than in his hands. The villagers, who would not have trusted him a crown, called those who did all the stupid "flats and goslings" in the language. Old Ling was at the bottom of all this, they said, for he went canting about on his "scue-bald pony," cracking of his master, like a very saint; but this might be only their prejudiced supposition—there was no evidence on the subject. However, a poor widow, who had put a few score pounds into Sampson Hook's hands, came one day for her interest. Sampson was not at home, but Mrs. Sampson had the poor woman into the parlour, kindly inquired her business, lamented that Mr. Hooks would not be at home that day, and asked the poor creature, who had thus come a long and weary way for a disappointment, to have some refreshment. While the poor woman ate, and lamented her hard case to have to come and go so far for nothing, she found Mrs. Hooks so tender and sympathising, that she begged of her, as a great

favour, to pay her the interest herself, to save an old woman another long journey. To convince her that all was right, she drew out the note, and handed it to Mrs. Hooks. The lady looked at it, declared that, for what she knew of such things, it might be right or wrong, but that she never ventured to meddle with such matters. As the poor widow went on to relate many of her own domestic affairs and troubles, Mrs. Hooks laid the note on her work-table, and, as soon as her visiter had done wiping her eyes on her apron—for she had opened up a whole history of her life's past and present trials—she folded up the paper and returned it to her.

The widow came again in a few days, found Sampson Hooks, luckily, this time at home, and presented her note. What, however, was her astonishment, when Mr. Hooks put on a very strange look, and said, "Truly, good woman, here is a promissory note; but who promises, or what I have to do with this note, is more than I can tell, for here is no name to it."

"No name!" said the poor woman; "no name! Oh, Lord bless you, dear sir, why do you like to frighten a poor body so? Here is your own honest name to it, just as you wrote it?"

"I tell you, woman, that what I say is true!

See here, there is no name whatever; and who and what you are is quite unknown to me. I have no recollection of you, and must believe that you are an impudent impostor. Go, get away with you. Go, as fast as you can!"

"No name!—you don't know me!—you!—great God! what do you mean?" exclaimed the poor woman, turning as white as a sheet, and trembling till she could not rise without holding fast by the chair.

Hooks held the note angrily open before her; and when she had gazed at it, and saw that really there was no name, she dropped, senseless, into the chair. When she recovered from her swoon, she found herself laid on the sofa, and Mr. and Mrs. Hooks were busily sprinkling her with water, and in a great bustle, but there was no servant present.

As soon as the widow looked up, and with a heavy sigh, and tears that began to gush forth in torrents, attempted to rise, Sampson Hooks said, in a flurried way—

"There is some mistake, good woman; there must be some great mistake. I don't understand it; you have come to a wrong place, or have brought a wrong paper. Compose yourself, and make what haste you can home, and see whether you have not another paper somewhere."

" Oh no, no ! the Lord above knows ! " exclaimed the poor woman, wringing her hands in her apron, wetting it through and through with her tears, and trembling in every joint—" The Lord above knows I have no other paper than this ! This is my little all—my all in this world ; it is the saving of a life. Oh, sir, sir ! don't kill me with fright ! You know me—you know the paper—you have paid me the interest these years ! See, it's all written on the back ; it is in your own hand ! Oh, worthy, worthy sir, do take pity on me ! "

" But what !—but why !—there is no name I tell you ! " said Mr. Hooks.

" Oh, the name was there when I was here only a few days ago ! The good lady here saw it ; and she knows that she read your name aloud, and said, ' Yes, that's my dear Sampson's own name, sure enough. ' "

" Oh, you wicked woman ! Oh, you false tongue, you ! Oh, how dare you say such a thing ? " exclaimed Mrs. Sampson Hooks. " I read the name ! I say it was my dear Sampson's name ! Woman, I say, how dare you utter such a falsehood before God ? "

" Before God and man I dare utter it ! " now cried the poor woman, who seemed at once to recover her strength, to lose her trembling, and

to stand a head taller, and looked no longer the same, but a woman in the prime of life, and with a figure and face full of fire. Such is the change which indignation can make sometimes in the weakest and most timid creature.

"I tell you!" she exclaimed, advancing to Mrs. Hooks, "I tell you, woman—for I have as much right to *woman* you as you have to *woman* me!—I tell you that there's *guillery** here, and I've a notion, madam, it's your doing, too. Didn't you read the name? Didn't you say it was your own dear Sampson's name, and that it always did you good to see it? Deny it if you dare! And so, mister," said she, turning passionately to Sampson Hooks, "pay me! pay me now, without more ado, or depend upon it worse will come of it. Pay me, I say, or I'll blow you far and wide, and make your name stink from here all the way to Lunnun! Pay me, or——"

"Softly, softly, good woman," now said Mr. Sampson Hooks, in his blandest and yet most commanding tone. "Let me advise you to moderate yourself. I say there must be some mistake; if you are sure that this is the paper that you had here but a few days ago, and that my name then stood on it, by what unaccount-

* Deception.

able circumstance can it have been removed? Have you no person at home who can have done this?"

"No, I have not a soul; there is not a soul who can have come into my chamber, where I keep this note. No, no!"

"Then, can it have been a rat, or a mouse, or a moth?"

"A rat! a mouse! a moth!" cried the enraged widow. "See there; does a rat, a mouse, a moth, gnaw an edge like that?" showing the place where the name had been most cleanly cut away. "I tell you," she continued, "a woman's eye can tell how that was done better than a man's can. That has been cut, and with scissors too; no knife leaves an edge like that! There's guillery, I tell you, and I'll venture to tell you, too, when it was done. It was done when the lady had it at her work-table; and the lady did it herself."

"What! Jezebel—huzzy—abominable woman! Do you say that I cut away the name?"

The widow nodded short and fiercely at her.

"Oh, do you hear and bear that, Mr. Hooks?" began his wife, sinking away into violent hysterics.

"Woman—woman!" cried Hooks, catching his wife in his arms, "see what you have done!"

You have killed the dear innocent! You have killed her by your wicked lies! Oh, never did she hear such language before in all her days! Poor dear innocent, who would not hurt a fly, a gnat, a ——” Mr. Hooks was confused by his terror for his wife, and in his hurry rang the bell with one hand, as he supported Mrs. Hooks to the sofa with the other. Scarcely, however, had he done so, when he became sensible that he had not taken a wary step, and turning to the widow, who gazed on the scene with a savage indifference, “Good woman,” said he, “be discreet; preserve delicacy before the servants; all will be right, no doubt.”

No sooner did the vindictive widow see two or three servants in the room, than, regardless of the hysterics of Mrs., and the fury of Mr. Hooks, she raised her voice, and held aloft the mutilated document.


“Pay me, then, I say,” cried she, “and let me go! Do you think that the curse of Heaven will not alight on such as you, that can rob a poor widow of her all?”

“Woman!” cried Sampson Hooks, in a voice of thunder, “cease your slanderous, insane lies! I say, begone, and if you have anything to say to me, come another day. You have surely done enough now.”

"No, not half enough," said the immovable woman; "not a quarter enough; you have cut off your name from your own note! You have cheated me of my all, and I *will* speak. Ay, I will shout it at the top of the street, and through the whole country, if you don't pay me!"

"Put out the mad woman!" cried Sampson Hooks, quite losing that mild suavity which he had so many years maintained; and the servants, who had stood staring and drinking in the strange words with astonishment, at length went up to her, and taking her by the arm, shewed her the door.

"Ay, go indeed! Yes, go will I," shouted she; "but I will make you glad to give me my money again, yet!" And with great strides she marched off, and at the first house she reached in the village she began vehemently to relate her wrongs. This was glorious fuel to the fire of the villagers; they soon ran together; the women, vehemently, and with tears, and vows of vengeance, detailed what had just taken place; and in less than a quarter of an hour the news was over the whole village. Men, women, and children, all rushed into the street. The tailor left his shopboard, with his breeches' knees unbuttoned, his stockings half down his legs, and a skein of thread round his neck. The smith's



bellows ceased to blow, and the red-hot iron was left to cool on the anvil. The carter stopped his team, and the village street was full of eager groups, who were all at once talking, listening, and gesticulating, as if about to execute some great vengeance. The poor woman was stopped every few yards to relate over and over again the story; she was taken into a house to have something to refresh her, and the crowd besieged the door as if there were some great wonder to be seen within—an angel with a broken wing or so. All declared that the wickedness of these tyrants would soon be properly exposed, and a dozen or more of the sympathizing villagers accompanied the poor widow down the lane on her homeward way, exhorting her to have legal advice, and to “trouble” old Sampson; though it would have required one much more learned in the law than any of them, to tell exactly how.

And what, then, was the real state of this case? Could the Hooks's have been guilty of this great crime? Was this mystery, indeed, cleared up? Another anecdote which has yet to be related will best answer all these questions.

There was once a poor man—oh, how often has this been the fate of scores of poor men at once; or in how many instances, where, as by an

infatuation, had they been, for a whole country round, in the habit of putting their hard-earned mite, before the days of savings-banks, into the hands of some fair-faced scoundrel, who at once stopped or *ran off*—it was all the same to them—and their all was gone for ever! There was a poor man who had put his money—it was a good sum for a poor man, it was a hundred pounds—into the hands of Mr. Sampson Hooks, on his note of hand. The interest had been paid duly and to the day, for five long years. The poor man was secure in his confidence, as if his money had been in “Lunnun Bank.” He came at length on his half-yearly day, and Mr. Hooks paid up his interest, and was particularly civil; but, on marking the payment on the back of the note, he observed that the paper was become much worn—it was actually in pieces at the folds; and he told the poor man that he had better leave it a few days and he would have it carefully copied for him on a new piece of paper. The man, in true country faith and simplicity, readily complied, nay, thanked Mr. Hooks cordially for his obliging behaviour. He came a week or two afterwards for his new note, and was shewn into Mr. Sampson Hooks’s presence.

“Well, my good fellow,” said Mr. Sampson, who sat at his desk, with a tremendous heap of

papers before him, "and pray what is your wish with me?"

The poor man looked naturally astonished; but smiling, said, "I've called for my note, sir."

"Your note! What note was that?"

"Oh, the note you were so good as to offer to copy for me."

"Ah, indeed! a note of business was it, to some of your friends?"

The poor man felt a cold, queer sort of sensation about his heart, and a sudden trembling went through his limbs, and he answered, with a great air of anxiety—

"It was the promissory note for my money, which you were so good as to offer to have copied out, you know, the other day—the note I have had my interest on these five years."

"A promissory note? To copy? My memory must fail me strangely. My good man, I can recall no such circumstance. Or, if I had it, it must be here!" beginning to rummage amongst and turn over the wilderness of papers. "There is an offer of money by Thomas Horrop; is that it? or this, an offer to mortgage a tenement and some copyhold land—is your name Kettlebender?"

"My name? Why, you know my name well

enough! You know me—Simon Ragley, well enough—it's my old note, my old crumpled note for a hundred pounds! Oh, laus, oh, laus! if it *should* be lost now!"

The poor man had come forward from where he had been standing by the door, and now eagerly leaned over the desk and its chaos of papers. He was a tall, thin, bony man, with a worn and clay-smeared jacket and breeches, of a sort of coarse drab plush, smeared, as if he were a brickmaker, with yellow and red. His knees seemed stiff, as if with rheumatism, and his ankles, clad in short thick cloth gaiters, and his big feet, with such lumps and protruberances as also marked the desperate battles he had had with this rheumatism. He limped and stood leaning hard on his thick stick, with a keen face, full of ruddy, fine stringy veins, and deep tawny wrinkles, and with an expression of devouring anxiety that would have delighted the eye of a Rubens.

"Pray God!" said he again, "it ben't lost! but if it be, sir, you know the sum, and all the interest is paid up—so you can give me another. You can do so, sir—can't you? Ay, do it now, sir," said the old man.

"Oh, very true. I could give you anything if I did but know that it was right. But as to this note—why you see, I can't call it to mind ;

my affairs are not like *yours*, my man ; they are so vast they quite overwhelm my mind. I depend wholly on my papers—I must do so ; but as to this paper of which you speak, I see nothing of it.”

“ Is that yaller ’un it ? ” said the poor man, attempting to stretch forth his hand and take one up ; but Mr. Sampson Hooks pushed him rudely back with his hand on his chest, crying,

“ Stop, fellow ! what are you about ? Do you think I allow any churl to come and thrust his paw into my private papers ? Stand back ! stand back, I say ! I will look at my leisure for this note you speak of, and if it be there, rest assured you shall have it. Your name is Webster, you say——”

“ Ragley—Simon Ragley is *my* name ; but give me another note ; never mind th’ oud ’un ; burn it when you find it ; give me another now. I can’t go away wi’out it.”

“ A strange fellow are you ! ” said Sampson Hooks ; “ do you think that I give notes for a hundred pounds to any scamp that pleases to ask me ? Show me any document proving that I owe you as much, and I will pay it you ; but document I see none, and no such note can I call to recollection. A very likely thing indeed it would be to give you a note on such grounds.

Go; come again in a few days. I will search—I will search; and if it's here—why, you'll have it."

"But you know *me*, Mister Hooks! You've seen me often enough—you wunna deny that!"

"Yes, I have seen you, Webster, or Ragman, or whatever you call yourself; but where or when I am not so sure of. Have you worked for me? Where was it?——"

"Almighty powers!" exclaimed the old man, now transported with rage; "but a pretty villain you are! I know you now, if you dunna know me! Gee me th' oud note; or, by the Lord, I'll break your villain's skull!"

And with that the bony fellow raised his huge knotty stick, and held it in act to strike, while his eyes blazed with actual rage; his teeth ground in his head, and his bony, sinewy figure looked like that of a giant skeleton, so high and gaunt and rigid did it seem. Sampson Hooks, who stood near an open French window, at one leap stood in the garden and attempted to close the window on his antagonist, but the fierce peasant banged it open with his left arm, making the glass fly ringing around with a noise that caused the gardener, who was at work among his flower-beds at some little distance, to raise his head and stand staring at this strange scene. Sampson

Hooks, who had evidently avoided calling in this time the help of the servants, as in the case of the widow, and had obeyed, at the man's menace, the merely instinctive feeling of self-preservation, without staying to reflect how he was to get rid of this ugly customer, now seeing that the gardener was aware of the scene, called hastily, "John! John! Help! help! Here! here!"

John came up, and Hooks cried hurriedly, "Seize him, put him out! Another of those desperate impostors who are now always making false claims—most probably a gang—most probably a gang! Seize him and put him out!"

"Ay, seize me!" cried the man, in a tone of defiance. "Thrust me out if you dare, John Bushy! You know better than to come within the reach of my stick! You are too honest a fellow, Bushy, to hurt a poor man that is robbed; ay, robbed, cheated by this villain!" and stamping his stick on the gravel walk, he went on to relate all that had passed, while Sampson Hooks had slipped away round the house.

John, the gardener, who saw the coast clear, came quickly up, and said softly to the man:

"Mr. Ragley, God knows that I won't lay a finger on you. I know you to be as honest as the day's long; but listen to me. You will do no good striving here. Let me advise you to go

away for the present and see what turns up. Remember, there's a God in heaven! I can't help you just now; if you stand five minutes longer you may lose me my place too; but I will, with all the pleasure in the world, give you any advice I can. I'll come on Sunday—that's the day after to-morrow—to your house, and we'll talk it over. But go now, only go!"

"John," said the old man, trembling with rage and agony of mind, "I am out of myself—I am mad. I don't know what to do; but I won't be any harm to you, neither. I'll e'en go; but as sure as God's in heaven, or the devil's in this hypocrite's soul, I'll have justice or his heart's blood!"

The old fellow walked off, limping and wiping his eyes on the back of his great bony hand, and coughing with rage. Once or twice he stopped, looked back as if he were resolved to return, but he only gazed wildly at the house, shook his stick threateningly, and again hobbled off. John closed the yard gate after him and then returned, with strange feelings, to his work.

It may be supposed that this, added to the widow's affair, made no small rumour. It spread through the whole country round. Other rumours grew quickly out of it, that, with all his gathering and cheating, Sampson Hooks' affairs

were in a wretched plight. There were rumours of writs and executions, and heaven knows what; and every strange man that was seen to advance to the Hall was supposed to be a lawyer's messenger, or bum-bailiff, or some such respectable character. But spite of all this the Hall itself was very quiet, and Mr. Sampson Hooks and his roadster, Black Jack, were seen as composedly as ever, jogging to and fro.

But one thing was certain: the man Simon Ragley had gone to a lawyer, and the lawyer had written to Sampson Hooks, threatening all the terrors of the law, leaving the clergyman to threaten all the terrors of the gospel, if he did not forthwith pay to the said Simon Ragley his money. On which Mr. Sampson Hooks most properly and most reasonably professed his readiness, nay, his excessive pleasure in such readiness, to pay Mr. Simon Ragley one hundred, or one thousand, or ten thousand pounds, if he could by any species of legal evidence show that he was so indebted to him. And therefore that lawyer felt, as well he might, no little perplexed, for his client had just no such proof to produce. But the lawyer, nevertheless, put on a very knowing air, and wrote to Mr. Sampson Hooks notice of further proceedings, accompanied by mysterious hints that more evidence of the fact would

be forthcoming, than he the said Sampson Hooks might possibly dream of. Sampson Hooks, however, strong in his own conceptions of the case, only repeated his former liberal offers and lay still.

Things were long in this interesting position; rumour was dealing very freely with Mr. Sampson Hooks' character round the country, and Mr. Hooks, like a very saint, was bearing all with the most admirable patience; while old Joe Ling, to whose knowledge these things were occasionally coming by slips of paper as he paused at different public-houses to refresh himself and his pony on his peregrinations, said, "Was there ever such a pack of fools, as to expect people to pay money to any scamp as asked it, and with no more to shew for it than he had to shew for the crown of England! Are you that good-natured fool? or you?—or you?" asked he tauntingly and triumphantly of the different persons in company. "By Leddy! now-a-days one finds it quite enough to pay what is clearly shewn to be due!"

But Providence had not been asleep, nor had he been away from the world during these transactions, and a very simple turn of his finger placed poor Simon Ragley and his lawyer in a triumphant position. The gardener of Sampson

Hooks, after the affair of Simon Ragley, was constantly falling, over his work, into deep reveries, from which he seldom awoke without some solemn shakes of the head. He was frequently so very much impressed by the recollection of the scene, that he would suddenly rise up and stare at the window out of which his master had so suddenly bolted and old Simon had so violently plunged after him. Nay, as he came past that window, he could not for the life of him help stopping and looking into the room itself, when he was sure nobody was there. As he saw his master take his walks about the garden, his eyes got a habit of involuntarily following him; and one day as he saw him there, walking to and fro, he observed that he pulled various papers out of his pocket, and became very much interested in their examination. As he did this the gardener observed that one paper fell from the lot, and that Mr. Sampson Hooks went on, evidently without noticing the fact. The gardener bent to his work, but with a constant look under his hat to ascertain whether his master ever noticed this fallen paper, but he did not, and soon after left the garden. I need not say that the door was hardly closed behind Mr. Sampson Hooks, when John Bushy was very briskly yet sedately walking along the path

where the paper had fallen, and first stooping here, and then stooping there, as if to gather some weeds, he finally picked up the paper, stuck it into his jacket pocket, and went at once home to his dinner, though it was half an hour too soon.

The moment he was out of Hooks's gates, he flew with rapid strides into the adjoining churchyard; and, as if he had got some particular fancy to run round the church, got on the opposite side of it, and, in a corner formed by a huge buttress, pulled out the paper and opened it. Any stranger who could have caught a glimpse of the worthy gardener at that moment, need not have inquired whether he had learned to read, for the moment he opened the longish, narrowish bit of old paper, he first turned red, then turned white, then looked round him, then stared right away into a great holly-bush, in a garden just beyond the churchyard-wall, and finally, putting the paper in his pocket, set off home as fast as his legs could carry him.

What honest John Bushy had got—if *honest* we can call him who had got something which should have seemed to be his master's—he never told, not even to his wife: but that same afternoon, stating that he had got to go to the next village about flower-pots, he went off as nimbly

as he had gone into the churchyard. As he never told anybody what he had got, it is not for us, who indeed never spoke to John Bushy in all our lives, to say what it was ; but we may state a simple historical fact, and that is, that from this very time old Simon Ragley's lawyer began to assume a much more confident tone in his communications with Mr. Sampson Hooks, begging him, at the same time, not to allow himself to fall into the expense which awaited him, if he would not pay Simon Ragley his hundred pounds. Mr. Sampson Hooks, however, only repeated that the said Simon must first shew cause, and there was an end of the matter. This seemed reasonable enough ; but lawyers are often very unreasonable, and this man seemed now to have a particular pleasure in urging the matter on. Sampson remained relentless ; the lawyer issued his writ ; Sampson put in appearance to it, and the matter came on for trial. The day had arrived ; the parties were arrived, too, in the town, when the lawyer made a last offer to settle the affair in private. He was tender of Mr. Hooks' character, he said, which Mr. Hooks contended meant only that he was very tender of his own, and too shrewd to bring a case for trial where there was no evidence against the defendant. Hooks again gave his

old answer—shew proof, and there needed nothing more.

To his overwhelming surprise, the lawyer assented ; declared that he *would* show proof, to save Mr. Hooks from universal scorn, and perhaps utter ruin ; and appointed an hour to meet at the office of Mr. Hooks's attorney.

They met.

" It is a pity," said Ragley's lawyer—" it is a great pity, Mr. Hooks, that this matter should have been permitted to come on so far as this."

" A great pity, indeed," replied Mr. Sampson Hooks ; " I have always said so. But why bring it so far ? I certainly did not."

" A very great pity," responded the lawyer ; " but will Mr. Hooks allow me to propose one thing, in order to shew who has brought it thus far ? Will Mr. Hooks swear—nay, I will not go to such a length—will he merely lay his hand on this Bible, and say from his heart and his conscience, before God, and before these present—" There stood Simon Ragley, gazing on Sampson Hooks with an expression which seemed to say—" I shall eat you up in another minute, and with a relish !"—and there stood also Mr. Hooks's lawyer, in a serious attention ! " Will Mr. Hooks do that, and declare that he knows nothing of the note or the debt in question ?"

"Sir," said Sampson Hooks, "this is the most extraordinary conduct I ever knew in my life! Surely it is not come so far as oaths and solemn protestations; they, surely, will be time enough when the matter is before the court. But was it for this that we came here? Was it not to see proof? And what I have to say here or elsewhere is, shew your evidence! Shew it at once, Mr. Attorney, or I take my leave."

"Then there it is!" said Ragley's lawyer, with a most solemn and significant look, laying before Sampson Hooks an old strip of paper, at sight of which he gave a sudden start, as if he saw the clothes of a man just dead of the plague.

"Do you know that hand, Mr. Hooks?"

"Ay, dun yo know *that hand*?" exclaimed old Simon Ragley, clapping his great bony hand on the lawyer's desk, close to the paper, with an astounding knock, so that it would have been difficult for some people to know which he had meant, the handwriting of the old paper, or his own ample member. But Mr. Hooks knew which in an instant. His face was in a moment full of blood: the whole mass in his body seemed to have rushed there. It seemed to fill his throat, to swell his tongue; his eyes started half-way from their sockets, and the whole man seemed

at the point of dropping in a fit of apoplexy. He staggered, seized the brass railings that surrounded the lawyer's desk with a wrench that made them crack, and clinging, trembling there, said, in husky and choking tones—"A mistake! a sad, a dreadful mistake! Oh! pay the man! pay the man directly!"

Old Simon Ragley, who gazed on this scene with a strange air of vengeful triumph, now stood close, face to face with the trembling wretch, thrust his flaming features into his very countenance, and shouted—

"So yo know it then! Yo can remember now, can yo?"

But Hooks did not hear him; he fell with a ponderous weight to the floor. Ragley's attorney laid his hand on his client's arm.

"Enough," said he, "leave him to his conscience. Leave him to God."

How long Sampson Hooks lay in his fit; how he was recovered and conveyed away, I know not; but I need not say that round the country, and especially in the village, there were strange jubilation and strange talking on this affair. The very church-bells were rung—yes, the bells of the steeple which fairly overlooked the Hall of Sampson Hooks were rung the whole remainder of the day in obstreperous revelry over his fall.

Everybody said that he would not hold up his head again,—that he must fly his country. But how false is the judgment which only hears one side! Sampson Hooks did hold up his head again, though it was with the sorrowful meekness of an innocent and a cruelly-treated man. Had he ever refused to pay the money on the production of the necessary note? Had he not always expressed his readiness to pay it? Had he not begged again and again, if they had anything more than a vague charge, that they should bring it out, and were it for ten thousand pounds he would instantly and gladly discharge it? Yet for this petty hundred pounds, which had entirely escaped his memory in the multiplicity of his affairs, he had been wantonly dragged forward; the necessary evidence wilfully withheld; his peace and feelings trifled with; his character dreadfully exposed to malignant slander, when five minutes of an open and generous treatment was all that was necessary.

Of course Simon Ragley was paid—nay, the widow herself was paid, for she immediately put her note into the same able lawyer's hands; and though it had no name to it, yet there was enough of Sampson Hooks's hand upon it—and it was paid.

The villagers and the common ignorant people

were little moved by Sampson Hooks's pathetic appeals; they cursed him for a tyrant and a hypocrite, but the wealthy and the better informed despised their modes of thinking. Their daily intercourse with Hooks was unabated; their carriages rolled as gaily as ever in and out of the great iron gates; the Hall was as gaily lit up for entertainments to which they crowded, when music and delicious viands made the house and gardens a paradise, if they did not make them a heaven.

And a heaven they did not make them. A blight and a blackness as of seventy years had fallen on both Mr. and Mrs. Hooks. That was a very superstitious time, and probably both Mr. and Mrs. Hooks had been brought up in the country. By the country firesides of those days what stories circulated! When but little occurred from day to day to form topics for conversation, how far back did country people then go with the histories of their ancestors and neighbours for matter of discourse! And a mass of superstitions had gathered about these relations, like moss and ivy round old trees. You heard gravely-related stories of ghosts and warnings, as of actual and undeniable facts. There were those who could tell you how they had met this and that man, suddenly, in solitary places, that

had been dead these twenty years. How, as they passed over fields, a raven had gone before, and perched on every stile till they came up to it, when it flitted on to the next. How they had seen a coffin borne on before them in the moonlight, and followed, wondering for whom it could be, having heard of no death, till, as it should have passed the brook behind the village, coffin and bearers had dissolved as it were away, and immediately there struck up a passing bell from the village steeple.

Mr. and Mrs. Sampson Hooks had most likely, I say, grown up among such superstitious people and talk, for it was a fact that they now became very timid, and ready to start at any shadow. They were never to be seen out late at night; they were very strict in their attendance at church; and yet there were strange rumours one evening abroad about them. It was said that old Joe Ling, spite of his old hat, and old coat, and old splashed gaiters, had grown rich. It was believed that he had amazingly robbed his master. Nay, it was a fact that he was once dismissed from his office of bailiff, and he went to the public-house of his own village and declared it himself, and began to hint strange things—and offered to bet any one that he would be in his office again in less than a month. And

sure enough it was so. His mouth grew again as close as that of a fish, but he built a new house, bought land, and did not care to deny that he had feathered his nest most warmly. It was said that Hooks would gladly have seen him poisoned, and yet he seemed to depend upon him, and defer to him as much or more than ever.

But what a change would any one have now seen in Hooks who had seen him only two years before ! His great, tall, broad frame was shrunk, and he stooped in the shoulders ; his face was sallow, his hair was grey and thin, and his once plump and ponderous cheeks flabby and cadaverous. Old Black Jack still went stately, but he went slowly, to accommodate his master.

Hooks had been, one market-day, at Derby, on business, which had detained him far later than than it was his wont to be out. The roads were so dreadful then that no carriage could travel that road at that time of the year, which was November. He was, accordingly, alone and on Black Jack. It was a wild, stormy night, and he had to ride far the greater part of the way along deeply muddy lanes, overhung by thick trees, with high branches, and lofty wild hedgerows on each side. Occasionally the way came out of these lanes upon high and open commons.

Hooks would have given a great deal to have avoided returning that night, but weighty affairs, he said, compelled him to hurry home.

He pushed on Jack, therefore, faster than he was generally wont to do; and, in truth, as fast as the roads would permit. The moon now and then broke out from the flying clouds as he hurried over Breadsall Moor, and then again lost itself. As he descended into the valley towards Gilt Brook, the gloom in the hollow before him had something fearful in it; but when he had just ridden through the brook, and began to ascend the dusky and winding lane before him, he thought he saw an animal—a dog or fox it seemed to be—run across the road, dragging a chain with it. It lost itself in the bushes, and for some time he heard and saw no more of it. But when he was plunging along in the deepest shadow and the deepest mud, it again caught his ear, though he could not discern it.

His horse snorted, started, and broke out into a strong perspiration. This alarmed Sampson Hooks, for superstitious people place a great reliance on the instinct for the supernatural in horses. He went on peering around him in the gloom to catch a sight of the strange apparition, but apparition it seemed determined not to be. Whether he went faster or slower the creature

accompanied him, for he could still hear the dragging of the chain, now on one side of the road, now on the other. When he came out on a high-lying heath, he made himself sure that here he must get a glimpse of the animal that had taken this strange fancy to accompany him. But he was mistaken. The moon was just at this point most deeply overcast, and Jack trotted on along the high dry road at a great rate; but, somehow or other, the dragging chain travelled on as fast as he did. When he was about again to plunge into the next lane, there came a fierce wind up the heath, that seemed ready to crush down bush and tree; and, as he was driven before this resistless and roaring hurricane into the black jaws of the lane, he saw, or thought he saw, the strange animal rush in before him.

The wind was now accompanied by rain; thunder, also, came in a sudden and terrible crash; and as Black Jack actually groaned as he toiled and smoked and snorted along the pitch-dark road, the rushing chain seemed to be under his very feet.

When Hooks reached home, he was more dead than alive. The clatter of Jack's hoofs on the stones of the court announced his arrival, for his master had no strength left to do it. He was found lying on his horse's neck, clinging with his

arms fast round it. He was lifted off by his servants and conveyed to bed, from which he never again arose. There are strange tales of the terrors of a guilty conscience still circulated in the village, of Sampson Hooks' death-bed ; but no one pitied him : on the contrary, there was a sort of sullen rejoicing, and there were even those who vowed that the corpse should not reach its grave in peace. My brother, Richard Howitt, in his " Antediluvian Sketches, and other Poems," seems to have had this man in his mind, for he traced his story well, in the poem entitled—

THE VILLAGE TYRANT'S FUNERAL.

The cottage psalm, it was sweetly sung,
As the evening bells of the village rung,
And calmly was closed that Sabbath of rest,
As faded the last crimson beam of the west;

The psalm has ceased, but a crowd is there,
And curses are breathed on the darkening air,
And many are busy, as falls the gloom ;
And they talk of a tyrant and his tomb.

And they look to the old church, lone and grey,
And then to the hall of the olden day,
Where the hated in life lies cold on his bier,
And the few that are with him are pale with fear

And loud is the throng, and they curse the dead
As they wait by the church for the coming tread
Of the few and the fearful that form the train
Of the dead they contemn ; but they wait in vain.

The moon is up, and the crowd is gone ;
The open grave is deserted and lone,
For the wrong'd and revengeful have pass'd away ;
They had waited and vowed ; but vain was their stay.

The moon is on high, and the funeral comes ;
And lightly they step by the villagers' homes ;
They have gained the churchyard ; yet how softly they tread !
They have fear in their hearts ; but not fear of the dead.

Ah ! the hate to the dead of the living they fear,
The hate of the many who lately were here ;
Who, enraged by the wrongs of the cruel and proud,
Would have torn out the corse from its coffin and shroud.

They have let down the coffin, and heap'd in the mould ;
But no service was read, and no bell has been toll'd ;
They return from the grave, yet how softly they tread,
The living they fear, and lament not the dead.

But though the idea of this poem must have had its origin in this too true story, yet the circumstances attending his funeral were not exactly as here described. No moon shone thus peaceably on the tyrant's open grave, nor lighted him calmly to his rest. Man raged, and Nature raged with him. The villagers, to whom he had not left one single foot of their paternal soil,

vowed that he should not have one foot of church-yard earth to rest in. They watched and watched, as described in the poem ; but Nature was more successful than they. Nature, which takes to her bosom all her children, spite of their errors or their crimes, raged, but only in mercy. Such a night as that on which the village tyrant actually went to his grave, the villagers declare never came down before or since. Wind in fierce tornadoes, rain in drowning deluges, thunder and lightning terrible and incessant, came sweeping, dashing, roaring, and flaming together. The villagers, waiting in deadly wrath for the coming funeral, which had feared the face of day, were fairly driven, by the fury of the elements, from their purpose. In the midst of the tempest the appointed bearers staggered and reeled along to the grave, and every moment expected to be dashed with their burden to the earth. As they hurried along the avenue from the Hall, a stupendous tree fell with a crash of thunder across their path, and had nearly been the death of them all. As they approached the church, the storm was so furious, that they were compelled to lower the coffin from their shoulders, and bear it low, scarcely above the surface of the earth. At one moment the whole church and church-yard were lit with the fire of heaven ; the light-

ning seemed to play round every pinnacle with a lurid radiance, and to fill the church with its blaze, and then there was a darkness as of Egyptian denseness. And amid the blind buffeting and drenching of the tempest, the cowering attendants, without bell or service, light, or the hearing of one another's voices, lowered down the coffin into its muddy, watery pit, and fled.

So went Sampson Hooks to his grave; and thus, only by the gracious fury of merciful Nature, were his remains protected from the relentless fury of embittered men.

JOHNNY DARBYSHIRE,

A

COUNTRY QUAKER.

It must have been remarked by the readers of "The Nooks of the World," in *Tail's Magazine*, and in my "Rural Life of England," that the people of the Midland Counties, particularly of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, have a singular practice of calling almost every body by diminutives of their Christian names, and seldom the plain, plump diminution of Tom, Jack, Jem, but Tommy, Jacky, Jemmy, and so on, generally ornamented with the prefix of *Old*, a word which in such use does not in the least denote age, for it is applied to youth, both in men and animals, just as much as to age, and indicates only a familiar mode of expression.

Thinking it as well to notice this peculiarity as belonging to the people from amongst whom these sketches are drawn before I introduced another character with such an appellation, I will now also preface the introduction of Johnny Darbyshire with a few other remarks which may give a clear idea of his character, and of similar ones as we go along.

I have repeatedly alluded to and explained the perfect freedom of life, and the other concurring causes which go to produce such an extraordinary variety of character, and of most eccentric character, in the Rural Nooks of England. In this truly patriarchal life the heads of families, by their unlimited sway, acquire often a most unlimited authority. They have no law but their own will, in the house, and scarcely any out of it. They, therefore, grow often not only most eccentric, but most wilful, arbitrary, overbearing, and humor-some. Of this class Johnny Darbyshire is a complete specimen.

John Darbyshire, or, according to the regular custom of the country,—Johnny Darbyshire, was a farmer living in one of the most obscure parts of the country, on the borders of the Peak of Derbyshire. His fathers before him had occupied the same farm for generations; and as they had been Quakers from the days of George Fox, who

preached there and converted them, 'Johnny also was a Quaker. That is, he was, as many others were, and no doubt are, habitually a Quaker. He was a Quaker in dress, in language, in attendance of their meetings, and above all, in the unmitigated contempt which he felt and expressed for everything like fashion, for the practices of the world, for the Church, and for music and amusements. There never was a man, from the first to the present day of the society, who so thoroughly embodied and exhibited that quality attributed to the Quaker, in the rhyming nursery alphabet,—“Q was a Quaker, and would not bow down.”

No, Johnny Darbyshire would not have bowed down to any mortal power. He would have marched into the presence of the king with his hat on, and would have addressed him with just the same unembarrassed freedom as “The old chap out of the West Countrie,” is made to do in the song. As to any of the more humble and conceding qualities usually attributed to the peaceful Quaker, Johnny had not an atom of these about him. Never was there a more pigheaded, arbitrary, positive, pugnacious fellow. He would argue anybody out of their opinions by the hour; he would “threep them down,” as he called it, that is, point blank and with a loud voice insist on

his possession of the right, and of the sound common sense of the matter; and, if he could not convince them, would at least confound them with his obstreperous din and violence of action. That was what he called clearing the field, and not leaving his antagonist a leg to stand on. Having thus fairly overwhelmed, dumbfounded, and tired out some one with his noise, he would go off in triumph, and say to the bystanders as he went,—“There, lads, you see he hadn’t a word to say for himself;” and truly a clever fellow must he have been who could have got a word in edgewise when Johnny had once fairly got his steam up, and was shrieking and storming like a cat-o’-mountain.

Yet had anybody told Johnny that he was no Quaker, he would have “threeped them down” that they did not know what a Quaker meant. What! were not his father, and his grandfather, and his great-grandfather before him all Quakers? Was not he born in the Society, and brought up in it? Hadn’t he attended first-day, week-day, preparative, monthly, quarterly, and sometimes yearly meetings too, all his life? Had not he regularly and handsomely subscribed to the monthly, and the national, and the Ackworth School Stocks? Had he not been on all sorts of appointments; to visit new members, new comers

into the meeting; to warn disorderly walkers; nay, had he not sate even on committees in London at yearly meetings? Had he not received and travelled with ministers when they came on religious visits into these parts? Had he not taken them in his tax-cart to the next place, and been once upset in a deep and dirty line with a weighty ministering friend, and dislocated his collar-bone?

What? He not a Quaker! Was George Fox one, did they think; or William Penn, or Robert Barclay indeed?

Johnny Darbyshire *was* a Quaker. He had the dress, and address, and all the outward testimonies and marks of a Quaker; nay, he was more; he was an overseer of the meeting, and broke up the meetings. Yes, and he would have them to know that he executed his office well. Ay, well indeed; without clock to look at, or without pulling out his watch, or being within hearing of any bell, or any other thing that could guide him, he would sit on the front seat of his meeting, where not a word was spoken, exactly for an hour and three quarters to a minute, and then break it up by shaking hands with the Friend who sate next to him. Was not that an evidence of a religious tact and practice? And had not the Friends once, when he was away, just

like people in a ship which had lost both rudder and compass, gone drifting in unconsciousness from ten in the morning till three in the afternoon, and would not then have known that it was time to break up the meeting, but that somebody's servant was sent to see what had happened, and why they did not come home to dinner?

Johany could see a sleeper as soon as any, were he ensconced in the remotest and obscurest corner of the meeting, and let him hold up his head and sleep as cleverly as he might from long habit. And did not he once give a most notable piece of advice to a *rich* Friend who was a shocking sleeper? Was not this Friend very ill, and didn't Johnny go to see him; and didn't he, when the Friend complained that he could get no sleep, and that not all the physic, the strongest opium even of the doctor's shop, could make him,—didn't Johnny Darbyshire say right slap-bang out, which not another of the plainest-spoken Friends dare have done to a rich man like that,—“Stuff and nonsense; and a fig for opium and doctor's stuff,—send, man, send for the meeting-house bench, and lie thee down on that, and I'll be bound thou'lt sleep like one of the seven sleepers.”

Undoubtedly Johnny was a Quaker; a right slap-dash Quaker of the old Foxite school; and

had anybody come smiling to him in the hope of getting anything out of him, he would have said to him as George Fox said to Colonel Hackett, "Beware of hypocrisy and a rotten heart!" True, had you questioned him as to his particular religious doctrines or articles of faith, he would not have been very clear, or very ready to give you any explanation at all, for the very best of reasons—he was not so superstitious as to have a creed. A creed! that was a rag of the old woman of Babylon. No, if you wanted to know all about doctrines and disputations, why, you might look into Barclay's Apology. There was a book big enough for you, he should think. For himself, like most of his cloth, he would confine himself to his *feelings*. He would employ a variety of choice and unique phrases; such as,—
"If a man want to know what religion is, he must not go running after parsons, and bishops, and all that sort of man-made ministers, blind leaders of the blind, who can talk by the hour but about what neither man, woman, nor child for the life of them, can tell, except when they come for their tithes, or their Easter dues, and then they speak plain enough with a vengeance. One of these Common-Prayer priests," said he, "once came to advise me about the lawfulness of paying church-rates, and, instead of walking into

my parlour, he walked through the next door, and nearly broke his neck, into the cellar. A terrible stramash of a lumber, and a plunging and a groaning we heard somewhere; and rushing out, lo and behold! it was no other than Diggory Dyson, the parish priest, who had gone headlong to the bottom of the cellar steps, and had he not cut his temples against the brass tap of a beer-barrel and bled freely, he might have died on the spot. And that was a man set up to guide the multitude! Had he been only led and guided by the Spirit of God, as a true minister should be, he would never have gone neck-foremost down my cellar steps. That's your blind leader of the blind!"

But if Johnny Darbyshire thought the "Common-Prayer priests" obscure, they must have thought him seven-fold so. Instead of doctrines and such pagan things, he talked solemnly of "centring down;" "being renewedly made sensible;" "having his mind drawn to this and that thing;" "feeling himself dipped into deep baptism;" "feeling a sense of duty;" and of "seeing, or not seeing his way clear" into this or that matter. But his master phrase was "living near the truth;" and often when other people thought him particularly provoking and insulting, it was only "because he hated a lie and the father of lies."

Johnny thought that he lived so near the truth, that you would have thought Truth was his next-door neighbour, or his lodger, and not living down at the bottom of her well as she long has been.

Truly was that religious world in which Johnny Darbyshire lived, a most singular one. In that part of the country, George Fox had been particularly zealous and well received. A simple country people was just the people to be affected by his warm eloquence and strong, manly sense. He settled many meetings there, which, however, William Penn may be said to have unsettled by his planting of Pennsylvania. These Friends flocked over thither with, or after him, and left a mere remnant behind them. This remnant, and it was like the remnant in a draper's shop, a very old-fashioned one, continued still to keep up its meetings, and carry on its affairs as steadily and gravely as Fox and his contemporaries did, if not so extensively and successfully. They had a meeting at Codnor Breach, at Monny-Ash in the Peak, at Pentridge, at Toad-hole Furnace, at Chesterfield, &c. Most of these places were thoroughly country places, some of them standing nearly alone in the distant fields; and the few members belonging to them might be seen on Sundays, mounted on strong horses, a

man and his wife often on one, on saddle and pillion, or in strong tax-carts; and others, generally the young, proceeding on foot over fields and through woods, to these meetings. They were truly an old-world race, clad in very old-world garments. Arrived at their meeting, they sate generally an hour and three-quarters in profound silence, for none of them had a minister in them, and then returned again. In winter they generally had a good fire in a chamber, and sate comfortably round it.

Once a-month, they jogged off in similar style to one of these meetings in particular, to what they called their monthly meeting, where they paid in their subscriptions for the poor, and other needs of the society, and read over and made answers to a set of queries on the moral and religious state of their meetings. One would have thought that this business must be so very small that it would be readily despatched, but not so. Small enough, Heaven knows, it was; but then they made a religious duty of its transaction, and went through it as solemnly and deliberately as if the very salvation of the kingdom depended on it. Oh, what a mighty balancing of straws was there! In answering the query, whether their meetings were pretty regularly kept up and attended, though perhaps there were but

half-a-dozen members to one meeting, yet would it be weighed and weighed again whether the phrase should be, that it was "pretty well attended," or "indifferently attended," or "attended, with some exceptions." This stupendous business having, however, at length been got through, then all the men adjourned to the room where the women had, for the time, been just as laboriously and gravely engaged; and a table was soon spread by a person, per agreement, with a good substantial dinner of roast-beef and plum-pudding; and the good people grew right sociable, chatty, and even merry in their way; while, all the time, in the adjoining stable, or, as in one case, in the stable under them, their steeds, often rough, wild creatures, thrust perhaps twenty into a stable without dividing stalls, were kicking, squealing, and rioting in a manner that obliged some of the good people occasionally to rise from their dinners, and endeavour to diffuse a little of their own quietness among them. Or, in summer, their horses would be all loose in the grave-yard before the meeting, rearing, kicking, and screaming in a most furious manner; which, however, only rarely seemed to disturb the meditations of their masters and mistresses.

And to these monthly meetings, over what long and dreary roads, on what dreadfully wet and

wintry days, through what mud and water, did these simple and pious creatures, wrapped in great-coats and thick cloaks, and defended with oil-skin hoods, travel all their lives long? Not a soul was more punctual in attendance than Johnny Darbyshire. He was a little man, wearing a Quaker suit of drab, his coat long, his hat, not cocked, but slouched, and his boots well worn and well greased.

Peaceful as he sate in these meetings, yet out of them, as I have remarked, he was a very Tartar, and he often set himself to execute what he deemed justice in a very dogged and original style. We may, as a specimen, take this instance. On his way to his regular meeting he had to pass through a toll-bar; and being on Sundays exempt by law from paying at it, it may be supposed that the bar-keeper did not fling open the gate often with the best grace. One Sunday evening, however, Johnny Darbyshire had, from some cause or other, staid late with his friends after afternoon meeting. When he passed through the toll-gate he gave his usual nod to the keeper, and was passing on; but the man called out to demand the toll, declaring that it was no longer Sunday night, but Monday morning, being past twelve o'clock.

"Nay, friend, thou art wrong," said Johnny,

pulling out his watch : " see, it yet wants a quarter."

" No, I tell you," replied the keeper, gruffly, " it is past twelve. Look, there is my clock."

" Ay, friend, but thy clock, like thyself, doesn't speak the truth. Like its master, it is a little too hasty. I assure thee my watch is right, for I just now compared it by the steeple-house clock in the town."

" I tell you," replied the keeper, angrily, " I've nothing to do with your watch : I go by my clock, and there it is."

" Well, I think thou art too exact with me, my friend."

" Will you pay me or not ?" roared the keeper ; " you go through often enough, in the devil's name, without paying."

" Gently, gently, my friend," replied Johnny ; " there is the money : and it's really after twelve o'clock, thou says ?"

" To be sure."

" Well, very well : then for the next twenty-four hours I can go through again without paying ?"

" To be sure ; everybody knows that."

" Very well, then I now bid thee farewell." And with that, Johnny Darbyshire jogged on. The gate-keeper chuckling at having at last extorted

a double toll from the shrewd Quaker, went to bed, not, on that quiet road, expecting further disturbance till towards daylight; but, just as he was about to pop into bed, he heard some one ride up and cry, "Gate!"

Internally cursing the late traveller, he threw on his things and descended to open the gate, when he was astonished to see the Quaker returned.

"Thou says it really *is* past twelve, friend?"

"To be sure."

"Then open the gate: I have occasion to ride back again."

The gate flew open, Johnny Darbyshire trotted back towards the town, and the man, with double curses in his mind, returned up stairs. This time he was not so sure of exemption from interruption, for he expected the Quaker would in a while be coming back homewards again. And he was quite right. Just as he was about to put out his candle, there was a cry of "Gate." He descended, and behold, the Quaker once more presented himself.

"It really *is* past twelve, thou says?"

"Umph!" grunted the fellow.

"Then, of course, I have nothing more to pay. I would not, however, advise thee to go to bed to-night, for it is so particularly fine that I propose

to enjoy it by riding to and fro here a few hours."

The fellow, who now saw Johnny Darbyshire's full drift, exclaimed, "Here, for God's sake, sir, take your money back, and let me get a wink of sleep."

But Johnny refused to receive the money, observing, "If it *was* after twelve, then the money is justly thine; but I advise thee, another time, not to be *too* exact," and with that he rode off.

Such was his shrewd, restless, domineering character, that his old friend, the neighbouring miller, a shrewd fellow too, thought there must be something in Quakerism which contributed to this, and was therefore anxious to attend their meetings, and see what it was. How great, however, was his astonishment, on accompanying Johnny, to find about half a dozen people all sitting with their hats on for a couple of hours in profound silence; except a few shufflings of feet, and blowing of noses; and then all start up, shake hands, and hurry off.

"Why, Master Darbyshire," said the dry old miller; "how is this? Do you sit without parson or clerk, and expect to learn religion by looking at your shoe toes? By Leddy! this warn't th' way George Fox went on. He was a very talking man, or he wouldna, ha' got such a heap

of folks together, as he did. You've clearly gotten o' th' wrong side o' th' post, Johnny, depend on 't; an' I dunna wonder now that you've dwindled awee so."

But if Johnny was as still as a fish at the Quaker meetings, he had enough to say at home, and at the parish meetings. He had such a spice of the tyrant in him, that he could not even entertain the idea of marrying, without it must be a sort of shift for the mastery. He, therefore, not only cast his eye on one of the most high-spirited women that he knew in his own society, but actually one on the largest scale of physical dimensions. If he had one hero of his admiration more than another, it was a little dwarf at Mansfield, who used to wear a soldier's jacket, and who had taken it into his head to marry a very tall woman, whom he had reduced to such perfect subjection, that he used from time to time to evince his mastery by mounting a round table and making the wife walk round it while he belaboured her lustily with a strap.

Johnny, having taken his resolve, made no circumbendibus in his addresses; but one day, as he was alone in the company of the lady, by name Lizzy Lorimer,—"Lizzy," said he, "I'll tell thee what I have been thinking about. I think thou'd make me a very good wife."

"Well," replied Lizzy; "now isn't that extraordinary? I was just thinking the very same thing."

"That's right! Well done, my wench,—now that's what I call hitting the nail on the head, like a right sensible woman!" cried Johnny, fetching her a slap on the shoulder, and laughing heartily. "That's doing the thing to some tune. I'm for none of your dilly-dally ways. I once knew a young fellow that was desperately smitten by a young woman, and though he could pluck up courage enough to go and see her, he couldn't summon courage enough to speak out his mind when he got there; and so he and the damsel sate opposite one another before the fire. She knew well enough all the while,—you're sharp enough, you women,—what he was after; and there they sate and sate, and at last he picked up a cinder off the hearth, and, looking very foolish, said, 'I've a good mind to fling a cowk at thee!' At which the brave wench, in great contempt, cried, 'I'll soon fling one at thee, if thou artn't off!' That's just as thou'd ha' done, Lizzy, and as I shouldn't," said Johnny, gaily, and laughing more heartily than before.

That was the sum and substance of Johnny Darbyshire's courtship. All the world said the trouble would come afterwards; but if it did come,

it was not to Johnny. Never was chanticleer so crouse on his own dung-hill, as Johnny Darbyshire was in his own house. He was lord and master there to a certainty. In doors and out, he shouted, hurried, ran to and fro, and made men, maids, and Lizzy herself, fly at his approach, as if he had got a whole cargo of Mercury's wings, and put them on their feet. It was the same in parish affairs; and the fame of Johnny's eloquence at vestries is loud to this day. On one occasion there was a most hot debate on the voting of a church-rate, which should embrace a new pulpit. Johnny had hurt his foot with a stub of wood as he was hurrying on his men at work in thinning a plantation. It had festered, and inflamed his leg to a terrible size; but, in spite of that, he ordered out his cart with a bed laid in it, and came up to the door of the vestry-room, where he caused himself to be carried in on the bed, and set on the vestry-room floor, not very distant from the clergyman. Here he waited, listening first to one speaker and then another, till the debate had grown very loud, when he gave a great hem; and all were silent, for every one knew that Johnny was going to speak.

"Now, I'll tell you what, lads," said Johnny, "you've made noise enough to frighten all

the jackdaws out of the steeple, and there they are, flying all about with a pretty cawarring. You've spun a yarn as long as all the posts and rails round my seven acres, and I dunna see as you've yet hedged in so much as th' owd wise men o' Gotham did, and that's a cuckoo. I've heard just one sensible word, and that was to recommend a cast iron pulpit, in preference to a wooden 'un. As to a church-rate to repair th' owd steeple-house, why, my advice is to pull th' owd thing down, stick and stone, and mend your roads with it. It's a capital heap o' stone in it, that one must allow,—and your roads are pestilent bad. Down with the old daw-house, I say, and mend th' roads wi't, and set th' parson here up for a guide-post. Oh! it's a rare 'un he'd make; for he's always pointing th' way to the folks, but I never see that he moves one inch himself."

"Mr. Darbyshire," exclaimed the clergyman, in high resentment, "that is very uncivil in my presence, to say the least of it."

"Civil or uncivil," returned Johnny; "it's the truth, lad, and thou can take it just as thou likes. I did not come here to bandy compliments; so I may as well be hanged for an old sheep as for a lamb—we'll not make two mouthfuls of a cherry; my advice is then to have a cast-iron pulpit, by

all means, and, while you are about it, a cast-iron parson, too. It will do just as well as our neighbour Diggory Dyson here, and a plaguy deal cheaper, for it will require neither tithes, glebe, Easter-dues, nor church-rates !”

Having delivered himself of this remarkable oration, to the great amusement of his fellow-parishioners, and the equal exasperation of the clergyman, Johnny ordered himself to be again hoisted into his cart, and rode home in great glory, boasting that he had knocked all the wind out of the parson, and if he got enough again to preach his sermon on Sunday, it would be all.

It was only on such occasions as these that Johnny Darbyshire ever appeared under the church roof. Once, on the occasion of the funeral of an old neighbour, which, for a wonder, he attended, he presented himself there, but with as little satisfaction to the clergyman, and less to himself.

He just marched into the church with his hat on, which, being removed by the clergyman's orders, Johnny declared that he had a good mind to walk out of that well of a place, and would do so only out of respect to his old neighbour. With looks of great wrath he seated himself at a good distance from the clergyman ; and, as this gentleman was proceeding, in none of the clearest

tones certainly, to read the appropriate service, Johnny suddenly shouted out, "Speak up, man, speak up! What art mumbling at there, man? We canna hear what thou says here!"

"Who is that?" demanded the clergyman, solemnly, and looking much as if he did not clearly perceive who it was. "Who is that who interrupts the service? I will not proceed till he be removed."

The beadle approached Johnny, and begged that he would withdraw.

"Oh!" said Johnny, aloud, so as to be heard through all the church, "I'll sit i' th' porch. I'd much rather. What's the use sitting here, where one can hear nothing but a buzzing like a bee in blossom?"

Johnny accordingly withdrew to the porch, where some of his neighbours, hurrying to him when the funeral was about to proceed from the church to the grave, said, "Mr. Darbyshire, what have you done? You'll as surely be put into th' spiritual court as you're a living man. You'd better ax the parson's pardon, and as soon as you can."

Accordingly, as soon as the funeral was over, and the clergyman was about to withdraw, up marched Johnny to him, and said, "What, I reckon I've affronted thee with bidding thee speak

up. But thou *should* speak up, man ; thou should speak up, or what art perched up aloft there for ? But, however, as you scollards are rayther testy, I know, in being taken up before folks, I mun beg thy pardon for 't'arno."*

"Oh, Mr. Darbyshire," said the clergyman, with much dignity, "that will not do, I assure you. I cannot pass over such conduct in such a manner. I shall take another course with you."

"Oh, just as tha' woot. I've axed thy pardon, haven't I ? and if that wunna do, why thou mun please thysen !"

Johnny actually appeared very likely to get a proper castigation this time ; but, however it was, he certainly escaped. The parishioners advised the clergyman to take no notice of the offence,—everybody, they said, knew Johnny, and if he called him into the spiritual court, he would be just as bold and saucy, and might raise a good deal of public scandal. The clergyman, who, unfortunately, was but like too many country clergymen of the time, addicted to a merry glass in the village public-house, thought perhaps that this was only too likely, and so the matter dropped.

For twenty years did Johnny Darbyshire thus give free scope to tongue and hand in his parish.

* For what I know.

He ruled paramount over wife, children, house, servants, parish, and everybody. He made work go on like the flying clouds of March; and at fair and market, at meeting and vestry, he had his fling and his banter at the expense of his neighbours, as if the world was all his own, and would never come to an end. But now came an event, arising, as so often is the case, out of the merest trifle, that more than all exhibited the indomitable stiffness and obstinacy of his character.

Johnny Darbyshire had some fine, rich meadow land, on the banks of the Derwent, where he took in cattle and horses to graze during the summer. Hither a gentleman had sent a favourite and valuable blood mare to run a few months with her foal. He had stipulated that the greatest care should be taken of both mare and foal, and that no one, on any pretence whatever, should mount the former. All this Johnny Darbyshire had most fully promised. "Nay, he was as fond of a good bit of horse-flesh as any man alive, and he would use mare and foal just as if they were his own."

This assurance, which sounded very well indeed, was kept by Johnny, as it proved, much more to the letter than the gentleman intended. To his great astonishment, it was not long before he one day saw Johnny Darbyshire come riding

on a little shaggy horse down the village where he lived, leading the foal in a halter.

He hurried out to inquire the cause of this, too well auguring some sad mischief, when Johnny, shaking his head, said—"Ill luck, my friend, never comes alone; it's an old saying, that it never rains but it pours; and so it's been with me. T'other day I'd a son drowned, as fine a lad as ever walked in shoe-leather; and, in hurrying to th' doctor, how should luck have it, but down comes th' mare with her foot in a hole, breaks her leg, and was obligated to be killed; and here's th' poor innocent foal. It's a bad job, a very bad job; but I've the worst on't, and it canna be helped; so, prithee, say as little as thou can about it,—here's the foal, poor dumb thing, at all events."

"But what business," cried the gentleman, enraged, and caring, in his wrath, not a button for Johnny Darbyshire's drowned son, in the exasperation of his own loss,—“but what business had you riding to the doctor, or the devil, on my mare? Did not I enjoin you, did you not solemnly promise me, that nobody should cross the mare's back?”

Johnny shook his head. He had indeed promised “to use her as his own,” and he had done it to some purpose; but that was little likely to

throw cold water on the gentleman's fire. It was in vain that Johnny tried the pathetic of the drowning boy; it was lost on the man who had lost his favourite mare, and who declared that he would rather have lost a thousand pounds—a hundred was exactly her value—and he vowed all sorts of vengeance and of law.

And he kept his word, too. Johnny was deaf to paying for the mare. He had lost his boy, and his summer's run of the mare and foal, and that he thought enough for a poor man like him, as he pleased to call himself. An action was commenced against him, of which he took not the slightest notice till it came into court. These lawyers, he said, were dear chaps, he'd have nothing to do with them. But the lawyers were determined to have to do with him, for they imagined that the Quaker had a deep purse, and they longed to be poking their long, jewelled fingers to the bottom of it.

The cause actually came into court at the assizes, and the counsel for the plaintiff got up and stated the case, offering to call his evidence, but first submitted that he could not find that any one was retained on behalf of the defendant, and that, therefore, he probably meant to suffer the cause to go by default. The court inquired whether any counsel at the bar was instructed

to appear for Darbyshire, in the case, *Shiffnall v. Darbyshire*; but there was no reply, and learned gentlemen looked at one another, and all shook their learned wigs; and the judge was about to declare that the cause was forfeited by the defendant, John Darbyshire, by non-appearance at the place of trial, when there was observed a bustle near the box of the clerk of the court; there was a hasty plucking off of a large hat, which somebody had apparently walked into court with on; and the moment afterwards, a short man, in a Quaker dress, with his grizzled hair hanging in long locks on his shoulders, and smoothed close down on the forehead, stepped, with a peculiar air of confidence and cunning, up to the bar. His tawny, sun-burnt features, and small dark eyes, twinkling with an expression of much country subtlety, proclaimed him at once a character. At once a score of voices murmured—"There's Johnny Darbyshire himself!"

He glanced, with a quick and peculiar look, at the counsel, sitting at their table with their papers before them, who, on their part, did not fail to return his survey with a stare of mixed wonder and amazement. You could see it as plainly as possible written on their faces,—“Who have we got here? There is some fun brewing here to a certainty.”

But Johnny raised his eyes from them to the bench, where sat the judge, and sent them rapidly thence to the jury-box, where they seemed to rest with a considerable satisfaction.

“Is this a witness?” inquired the judge. “If so, what is he doing there, or why does he appear at all, till we know whether the cause is to be defended?”

“Ay, Lord Judge, as they call thee, I reckon I am a witness, and the best witness too that can be had in the case, for I’m the man himself; I’m John Darbyshire. I didn’t mean to have anything to do with these chaps i’ their wigs and gowns, with their long, dangling sleeves; and I dunna yet mean to have onything to do wi’ ’em. But I just heard one of ’em tell thee, that this cause was not going to be defended; and that put my monkey up, and so, thinks I, I’ll e’en up and tell ’em that it will be defended though; ay, and I reckon it will too; Johnny Darbyshire was never yet afraid of the face of any man, or any set of men.”

“If you are what you say, good man,” said the judge, “defendant in this case, you had better appoint counsel to state it for you.”

“Nay, nay, Lord Judge, as they call thee,—hold a bit; I know better than that. Catch Johnny Darbyshire at flinging his money into a

lawyer's bag! No, no. I know them chaps wi' wigs well enough. They've tongues as long as a besom steal, and fingers as long to poke after 'em. Nay, nay, I don't get my money so easily as to let them scrape it up by armfuls. I've worked early and late, in heat and cold, for my bit o' money, and long enough too, before these smart chaps had left their mothers' apron-strings; and let them catch a coin of it, if they can. No! I know this case better than any other man can, and for why? Because I was in it. It was me that had the mare to summer; it was me that rode her to the doctor; I was in at th' breaking of th' leg, and, for that reason, I can tell you exactly how it all happened. And what's any of those counsellors,—sharp, and fine, and knowing as they look, with their tails and their powder,—what are they to know about the matter, except what somebody'd have to tell 'em first? I tell you, I saw it, I did it, and so there needs no twice telling of the story."

"But are you going to produce evidence?" inquired the counsel for the other side.

"Evidence? to be sure I am. What does the chap mean? Evidence? why, I'm defender and evidence and all!"

There was a good deal of merriment in the court, and at the bar, in which the judge himself joined.

"There wants no evidence besides me; for, as I tell you, I did it, and I'm not going to deny it."

"Stop!" cried the judge, "this is singular. If Mr. Darbyshire means to plead his own cause, and to include it in his evidence, he must be sworn. Let the oath be administered to him."

"Nay, I reckon thou need put none of thy oaths to me! My father never brought me up to cursing and swearing, and such like wickedness. He left that to th' ragamuffins and rascallions i' th' street. I'm no swearer, nor liar neither,—thou may take my word safe enough."

"Let him take his affirmation, if he be a member of the Society of Friends."

"Ay, now thou speaks sense, Lord Judge. Ay, I'm a member, I warrant me."

The clerk of the court here took his affirmation, and then Johnny proceeded.

"Well, I don't feel myself any better, or any honestest now for making that affirmation. I was just going to tell the plain truth before, and I can only tell th' same now. And, as I said, I'm not going to deny what I've done. No! Johnny Darbyshire's not the man that ever did a thing and then denied it. Can any of these chaps i' th' wigs say as much? Ay, now I reckon," added he, shaking his head archly at the gentlemen of the bar, "now

I reckon you'd like, a good many on you there, to be denying this thing stoutly for me? You'd soon persuade a good many simple folks here that I never did ride the mare, never broke her leg, nay, never saw her that day at all. Wouldn't you, now? wouldn't you?"——

Here the laughter, on all sides, was loudly renewed.

"But I'll take precious good care ye *dumna*! No, no! that's the very thing that I've stepped up here for. It's to keep your consciences clear of a few more additional lies. Oh dear! I'm quite grieved for you, when I think what falsities and deceit you'll one day have to answer for, as it is."

The gentlemen, thus complimented, appeared to enjoy the satire of Johnny Darbyshire; and still more was it relished in the body of the court.

But again remarked the judge, "Mr. Darbyshire, I advise you to leave the counsel for the plaintiff to prove his case against you."

"I'st niver oss!" exclaimed Johnny, with indignation.

"I'st niver oss!" repeated the judge. "What does he mean?—I don't understand him," and he looked inquiringly at the bar.

"He means, my lord," said a young counsel,

“that he shall never offer,—never attempt to do so.”

“That’s a Darbyshire chap now,” said Johnny, turning confidently towards the jury-box, where he saw some of his county farmers. “He understands good English.”

“But good neighbours there,” added he, addressing the jury, “for I reckon it’s you that I must talk to on this business; I’m glad to see that you are, a good many on you, farmers like myself, and so up to these things. To make a short matter of it then,—I had the mare and foal to summer; and the gentleman laid it down, strong and fast, that she shouldn’t be ridden by anybody. And I promised him that I would do my best, that nobody should ride her. I told him that I would use her just as if she was my own,—and I meant it. I meant to do the handsome by her and her master too; for I needn’t tell you, that I’m too fond of a bit of good blood to see it willingly come to any harm. Nay, nay, that never was the way of Johnny Darbyshire. And there she was, the pretty creature, with her handsome foal, cantering and capering round her in the meadow; it was a pleasure to see it, it was indeed! And often have I stood and leaned over the gate and watched them, till I felt a’most as fond of them as of my own children; and never

would leg have crossed her while she was in my possession had that not happened that may happen to any man, when he least expects it.

“My wife had been ill, very ill. My poor Lizzy, I thought I should ha’ certainly lost her. The doctors said she must be kept quiet in bed; if she stirred for five days she was a lost woman. Well, one afternoon, as I was cutting a bit of grass at th’ bottom o’ th’ orchard for the osses, again they came from ploughing the fallows; I heard a shriek that went through me like a bag-gonet. Down I flings th’ sycthe. ‘That’s Lizzy, and no other!’ I shouted to myself. ‘She’s out of bed,—and, goodness! what can it be? She’s ten to one gone mad with a brain fever!’ There seemed to have fallen ten thousand millstones on my heart. I tried to run, but I couldn’t. I was as cold as ice. I was as fast rooted to the ground as a tree. There was another shriek more piercing than before—and I was off like an arrow from a bow—I was loose then. I was all on fire. I ran like a madman till I came within sight of th’ house; and there I saw Lizzy in her night-gown, with half her body out of the window, shrieking and wringing her hands like any crazed body.

“‘Stop! stop!’ I cried, ‘Lizzy! Lizzy! back! back! for heaven’s sake!’

“‘There! there!’ screamed she, pointing with

staring eyes and ghastly face down into the Darrant that runs under the windows.

“‘Oh God!’ I exclaimed, ‘she’ll drown herself! she’s crazed, she means to fling herself in—’ groaning as I ran, and trying to keep crying to her, but my voice was dead in my throat.

“When I reached her chamber, I found her fallen on the floor—she was as white as a ghost, and sure enough I thought she was one. I lifted her upon the bed, and screamed again for the nurse, for the maid, but not a soul came. I rubbed Lizzy’s hands; clapped them; tried her smelling-bottle. At length she came to herself with a dreadful groan,—flushed open her eyes wide on me, and cried—‘Didst see him? Didst save him? Where is he? Where is he?’

“‘Merciful Providence!’ I exclaimed. ‘She’s gone only too sure! It’s all over with her!’

“‘Where is he? Where’s my dear Sam? Thou didn’t let him drown?’

“‘Drown? Sam? What?’ I cried. ‘What dost mean, Lizzy?’

“‘Oh, John! Sammy!—he was drowning i’ th’ Darrant—oh!——’

“She fainted away again, and a dreadful truth flashed on my mind. She had seen our little Sammy drowning; she had heard his screams, and sprung out of bed, forgetful of herself, and

looking out, saw our precious boy in the water. He was sinking! He cried for help! there was nobody near, and there Lizzy stood and saw him going, going, going down! There was not a soul in the house. The maid was gone to see her mother that was dying in the next village; the nurse had been suddenly obliged to run off to the doctor's for some physic; Lizzy had promised to lie still till I came in, and, in the meantime—this happens. When I understood her, I flew down stairs, and towards the part of the river she had pointed to. I gazed here and there, and at length caught sight of the poor boy's coat floating, and with a rake I caught hold of it, and dragged him to land. But it was too late! Frantic, however, as I was, I flew down to the meadow with a bridle in my hand, mounted the blood-mare,—she was the fleetest in the field by half, and away to the doctor. We went like the wind. I took a short cut for better speed, but it was a hobbly road. Just as I came in sight of the doctor's house there was a slough that had been mended with stones and fagots and anything that came to hand. I pushed her over, but her foot caught in a hole amongst the sticks, and—crack! it was over in a moment.

“Neighbours, neighbours! think of my situation? Think of my feelings. Oh! I was all one

great groan! My wife! my boy! the mare! it seemed as if Job's devil was really sent out against me. But there was no time to think; I could only feel, and I could do that running. I sprang over the hedge. I was across the fields, and at the doctor's; ay, long before I could find breath to tell him what was amiss. But he thought it was my wife that was dreadfully worse. 'I expected as much,' said he, and that instant we were in the gig that stood at the door, and we were going like fire back again. But——"

Here Johnny Darbyshire paused;—the words stuck in his throat,—his lips trembled,—his face gradually grew pale, and livid, as if he were going to give up the ghost. The court was extremely moved: there was a deep silence, and there were heard sobs from the throng behind. The judge sate with his eyes fixed on his book of minutes, and not a voice even said—"Go on."

Johnny Darbyshire meantime, overcome by his feelings, had sate down at the bar, a glass of water was handed to him,—he wiped his forehead with his handkerchief several times, heaved a heavy convulsive sigh or two from his labouring chest,—and again arose.

"Judge, then," said he, again addressing the jury, "what a taking I was in. My boy—but

no—I canna touch on that, he was—gone!” said he in a husky voice that seemed to require all his physical force to send it from the bottom of his chest.—“My wife was for weeks worse than dead, and never has been, and never will be herself again. When I inquired after the mare,—you can guess—when was a broken leg of a horse successfully set again? They had been obliged to kill her!—”

“Now, neighbours, I deny nothing. I wunna!—but I’ll put it to any of you, if you were in like case, and a fleet mare stood ready at hand, would you have weighed anything but her speed against a wife, and—a child?—No, had she been my own, I should have taken her, and that was all I had promised! But there, neighbours, you have the whole business,—and so do just as you like,—I leave it wi’ you.”

Johnny Darbyshire stepped down from the bar, and disappeared in the crowd. There was a deep silence in the court, and the very jury were seen dashing some drops from their eyes. They appeared to look up to the judge as if they were ready to give in at once their verdict, and nobody could doubt for which party; but at this moment the counsel for the plaintiff arose, and said:—

“Gentlemen of the Jury,—you know the old

saying—‘He that pleads his own cause has a fool for his client.’ We cannot say that the proverb has held good in this case. The defendant has proved himself no fool. Never in my life have I listened to the pleadings of an opponent with deeper anxiety. Nature, and the awful chances of life, have made the defendant in this case more than eloquent. For a moment I actually trembled for the cause of my client,—but it was for a moment only. I should have been something less than human if I had not, like every person in this court, been strangely affected by the singular appeal of the singular man who has just addressed you; but I should have been something less than a good lawyer if I did not again revert confidently to those facts which were in the possession of my witnesses now waiting to be heard. Had this been the only instance in which the defendant had broken his engagement, and mounted this mare, I should in my own mind have flung off all hope of a verdict from you. God and Nature would have been too strong for me in your hearts; but, fortunately for my client, it is not so. I will shew you, on the most unquestionable evidence, that it was not the first nor the second time that Mr. Darbyshire had mounted this prohibited but tempting steed. He had been seen, as one

of the witnesses expresses it, 'frisking about' on this beautiful animal, and asking his neighbours what they thought of such a bit of blood as that. He had on one occasion been as far as Crich fair with her, and had allowed her to be cheapened by several dealers as if she were his own, and then proudly rode off, saying—'Nay, nay, it was not money that would purchase pretty Nancy,' as he called her." Here the counsel called several respectable farmers, who amply corroborated these statements; and he then proceeded. "Gentlemen, there I rest my case. You will forget the wife and the child, and call to mind the 'frisking,' and Crich fair. But, to put the matter beyond a doubt, we will call the defendant again, and put a few questions to him."

The court crier called,—but it was in vain. Johnny Darbyshire was no longer there. As he had said, "he had left it wi' em," and was gone. The weight of evidence prevailed; the jury gave a verdict for the plaintiff—one hundred pounds.

The verdict was given, but the money was not yet got. When called on for payment, Johnny Darbyshire took no further notice of the demand than he had done of the action. An execution was issued against his goods; but when it was served, it was found that he had no goods. A brother stepped in with a clear title to all on

Johnny's farm, by a deed dated six years before, on plea of moneys advanced, and Johnny stood only as manager. The plaintiff was so enraged at this barefaced scheme to bar his just claim, Johnny's bail sureties being found equally unsubstantial, that he resolved to arrest Johnny's person. The officers arrived at Johnny's house to serve the writ, and found him sitting at his luncheon alone. It was a fine summer's day,—everybody was out in the fields at the hay. Door and window stood open, and Johnny, who had been out on some business, was refreshing himself before going to the field too. The officers entering declared him their prisoner. "Well," said Johnny, "I know that very well. Don't I know a bum-baily when I see him? But sit down and take something; I'm hungry if you ar'na, at all events."

The men gladly sate down to a fine piece of cold beef, and Johnny said—"Come, fill your glasses,—I'll fetch another jug of ale. I reckon you'll not give me a glass of ale like this where we are going."

He took a candle, descended the cellar, one of the officers peeping after him to see that all was right, and again sitting down to the beef and beer. Both of them found the beef splendid; but beginning to find the ale rather long in making

its appearance, they descended the cellar, and found Johnny Darbyshire had gone quietly off at a back door.

Loud was the laughter of the country round at Johnny Darbyshire's outwitting of the bailiffs, and desperate was their quest after him. It was many a day, however, before they again got sight of him. When they did, it was on his own hearth, just as they had done at first. Not a soul was visible but himself. The officers declared now that they would make sure of him, and yet drink with him too.

"With all my heart," said Johnny; "and draw it yourselves, too, if you will."

"Nay, I will go down with you," said one; "my comrade shall wait here above."

"Good," said Johnny, lighting a candle.

"Now, mind, young man," added he, going hastily forward towards the cellar steps,—“mind, I say, some of these steps are bad. It's a dark road, and—nay, here!—this way—follow me exactly.”

But the man was too eager not to let Johnny go too far before him; he did not observe that Johnny went some distance round before he turned down the steps. There was no hand-rail to this dark flight of steps, and he walked straight over into the opening.

“Hold!—hold! Heavens! the man’s gone—didn’t I tell him!—”

A heavy plunge and a groan announced the man’s descent into the cellar.

“Help! — help!” cried Johnny Darbyshire, rushing wildly into the room above. “The man, like a madman, has walked over the landing into the cellar. If he isn’t killed, it’s a mercy. Help!” snatching another candle; “but hold—take heed! take heed! or thou’lt go over after him!”

With good lighting, and careful examination of the way, the officer followed. They found the other man lying on his back, bleeding profusely from his head, and insensible.

“We must have help! there’s no time to lose!” cried Johnny Darbyshire, springing up stairs.

“Stop!” cried the distracted officer, left with his bleeding fellow, springing up the steps after Johnny. But he found a door already bolted in his face; and cursing Johnny for a treacherous and murderous scoundrel, he began vainly denouncing his barbarity in leaving his comrade thus to perish, and kicked and thundered lustily at the door.

But he did Johnny Darbyshire injustice. Johnny had no wish to hurt a hair of any man’s head. The officer had been eager and confident, and occasioned his own fall; and even now Johnny

had not deserted him. He appeared on horseback at the barn where threshers were at work ; told them what had happened ; gave them the key of the cellar door, bade them off and help all they could ; and said he was riding for the doctor. The doctor indeed soon came, and pronounced the man's life in no danger, though he was greatly scratched and bruised. Johnny himself was again become invisible.

From this time, for nine months, the pursuit of Johnny Darbyshire was a perfect campaign, full of stratagems, busy marchings, and expectations, but of no surprises. House, barns, fields, and woods, were successively ferretted through, as report whispered that he was in one or the other. But it was to no purpose ; not a glimpse of him was ever caught ; and fame now loudly declared that he had safely transferred himself to America. Unfortunately for the truth of this report, which had become as well received as the soundest piece of history, Johnny Darbyshire was one fine moonlight night encountered full face to face, by some poachers crossing the fields near his house. The search became again more active than ever, and the ruins of Wingfield Manor, which stood on a hill not far from his dwelling, were speedily suspected to be haunted by him. These were hunted over and over, but no trace of Johnny

Darbyshire, or any sufficient hiding-place for him, could be found, till, one fine summer evening, the officers were lucky enough to hit on a set of steps which descended amongst bushes into the lower parts of the ruins. Here, going on, they found themselves, to their astonishment, in an ample old kitchen, with a fire of charcoal in the grate, and Johnny Darbyshire, with a friend or two, sitting most cozily over their tea. Before they could recover from their surprise, Johnny, however, had vanished by some door or window, they could not tell exactly where, for there were sundry doorways issuing into dark places of which former experience bade them beware. Rushing up again, therefore, to the light, they soon posted some of their number around the ruins, and, with other assistance sent for from the village, they descended again, and commenced a vigilant search. The result had been patiently waited for a good while by those posted without, when suddenly, as rats are seen to issue from a rick when the ferret is in it, Johnny Darbyshire was seen ascending hurriedly a broken staircase, that was partly exposed to the open day by the progress of dilapidation, and terminated abruptly above.

Here, at this abrupt and dizzy termination, for the space of half a minute, stood Johnny Darbyshire, looking round, as if calmly surveying

the landscape, which lay, with all its greenness and ascending smokes of cottage chimneys, in the gleam of the setting sun. Another instant, and an officer of the law was seen cautiously scrambling up the same ruinous path ; but, when he had reached within about a dozen yards or so of Johnny, he paused, gazed upwards and downwards, and then remained stationary. Johnny, taking one serious look at him, now waved his hand as bidding him adieu, and disappeared in a mass of ivy.

The astonished officer on the ruined stair now hastily retreated downwards ; the watchers on the open place around ran to the side of the building where Johnny Darbyshire had thus disappeared, but had scarcely reached the next corner, when they heard a loud descent of stones and rubbish, and, springing forward, saw these rushing to the ground at the foot of the old Manor, and some of them springing and bounding down the hill below. What was most noticeable, however, was Johnny Darbyshire himself, lying stretched, apparently lifeless, on the greensward at some little distance.

On examining afterwards the place, they found that Johnny had descended between a double wall,—a way, no doubt, well known to him, and thence had endeavoured to let himself down the

wall by the ivy, which grew enormously strong there; but the decayed state of the stones had caused the hold of the ivy to give way, and Johnny had been precipitated, probably from a considerable height. He still held quantities of leaves and ivy twigs in his hands.

He was conveyed as speedily as possible, on a door, to his own house, where it was ascertained by the surgeon that life was sound in him, but that, besides plenty of severe contusions, he had broken a thigh. When this news reached his prosecutor, though Johnny was declared to have rendered himself, by his resistance to the officers of the law, liable to outlawry, this gentleman declared that he was quite satisfied; that Johnny was punished enough, especially as he had been visited with the very mischief he had occasioned to the mare. He declined to proceed any further against him, paid all charges and costs, and the court itself thought fit to take no farther cognizance of the matter.

Johnny was, indeed, severely punished. For nearly twelve months he was confined to the house, and never did his indomitable and masterful spirit exhibit itself so strongly and characteristically as during this time. He was a most troublesome subject in the house. As he sate in his bed, he ordered, scolded, and ruled

with a rod of iron all the women, including his wife and daughter, so that they would have thought the leg and the confinement nothing to what they had to suffer.

He at length had himself conveyed to the sitting-room or the kitchen, as he pleased, in a great easy chair; but, as he did not satisfy himself that he was sufficiently obeyed, he one day sent the servant-girl to fetch him the longest scarlet bean-stick that she could find in the garden. Armed with this, he declared that he would have his own way,—he could reach them now! And, accordingly, there he sate, ordering and scolding, and, if not promptly obeyed in his most extravagant commands, not sparing to inflict substantial knocks with his pea-prick, as he called it. This succeeded so well that he would next have his chair carried to the door, and survey the state of things without.

“Ay, he knew they were going on prettily. There was fine management, he was sure, when he was thus laid up. He should be ruined, that was certain. Oh, if he could but see the ploughing and the crops,—to see how they were going on, would make the heart of a stone ache, he expected.”

His son was a steady young fellow, and, it must be known, was all the while farming, and carrying

on the business much better than he himself had ever done.

“But he would be with them one of these days, and for the present he would see his stock at all events.”

He accordingly ordered the whole of his stock, his horses, his cows, his bullocks, his sheep, his calves, his pigs, and poultry, to be all, every head of them, driven past as he sate at the door. It was like another naming of the beasts by Adam, or another going up into the Ark. There he sate, swaying his long stick; now talking to this horse and that cow. To the old bull he addressed a long speech; and every now and then he broke off to rate the farm-servants for their neglect of things. “What a bag of bones was this heifer; what a skeleton was that horse! Why, they must have been fairly starved on purpose; nay, they must have been in the pinfold all the time he had been laid up: But he would teach the lazy rogues a different lesson as soon as he could get about.”

And the next thing was to get about in his cart, with his bed laid in it. In this he rode over his farm; and it would have made a fine scene for Fielding or Goldsmith, to have seen all his proceedings, and heard all his exclamations and remarks, as he surveyed field after field.

“What ploughing! what sowing! Why, they must have had a crooked plough, and a set of bandy-legged horses, to plough such ploughing. There was no more straightness in their furrows than in a dog’s hind leg. And then, where had the man flung the seed to? Here was a bit come up, and there never a bit. It was his belief that they must go to Jericho to find half of his corn that had been flung away. What! had they picked the windiest day of all the year to scatter his corn on the air in? And then the drains were all stopped; the land was drowning, was starving to death: and where were the hedges all gone to? Hedges he left, but now he only saw gaps!

So he went round the farm, and for many a day did it furnish him with a theme of scolding in the house.

Such was Johnny Darbyshire; and thus he lived for many years. We sketch no imaginary character, we relate no invented story. Perhaps a more perfect specimen of the shrewd and clever man converted into the local and domestic tyrant, by having too much of his own humour, never was beheld; but the genus to which Johnny Darbyshire belonged is far from extinct. In the nooks of England there are not few of them yet to be found in all their froward glory; and in the most busy cities, though the great prominences of

their eccentricities are rubbed off by daily concussion with men as hard-headed as themselves, we see glimpses beneath the polished surface, of what they would be in ruder and custom-freer scenes. The Johnny Darbyshires may be said to be instances of English independence run to seed.

CICELY HARDINGE.

“ Too late !—Alas ! that it should wake too late,—
The mind which makes our pride, but mars our fate !”

I WAS sauntering one evening upon the long, low, antiquated bridge, at the end of an old provincial town, in which I was paying a visit of some weeks—much amused, (for it was the eve of a great annual fair,) with the continual stream of country people that was pouring over it. To a person, whose eye is chiefly conversant with town figures, there is something exceedingly striking and picturesque in the various persons and costumes which such an occasion presents. The free and unconstrained inhabitants of the country seem to bring their characters and feelings broadly blazoned on their fronts. Their tall, full-grown

persons, their homely style of action, their unshorn locks, their rough, ruddy, and familiar faces, lit up with the interest of their concerns, of which they come loudly talking, or rather shouting, to each other,—and their pleasant recognition of old acquaintances at almost every step, whom they hail frankly and merrily, with a quaint, jocular humour, which is as sonorous and unguarded as if it were played off in their own quiet fields;—one cannot but be touched and entertained with such a display of human nature, *naïve*, bold and English.

My eye was wandering from wave to wave of this torrent of simple and hearty beings; pedestrian servants in their best holiday suits—the men with their great knotty sticks, the women in their red or grey cloaks; farmers of the old school, coming jog, jog, on their heavy, shaggy-heeled horses, with their wives pillioned behind them—or, in light carts, a whole family smiling together under a green awning, or under cover of the broad, blue sky; farmers of the new school, with bright boots and spurs, on mettled steeds, or in gigs, which swept rapidly past their elder friends; jockies with their long string of horses, and show-people, with their huge, creaking caravans;—when my attention was suddenly arrested by a group of a different character.

It consisted of three men, of a foreign aspect ; two of whom carried pedal-harps, and the third a box upon his back. They were men of a dark complexion, of handsome features, of a profuse growth of black whiskers—whom, in a passing glance, we might take for either strolling Italians or gipseys ; men of those leathern, slouching hats, and long, swinging coats, which such perambulating gentry affect. Not far behind them I observed three girls, who, although far younger than themselves, evidently belonged to them. They were girls, the oldest of whom did not appear to have much exceeded her twentieth year, although the youngest of the men must have been considerably more than thirty. Two of them were young creatures of great beauty, such as free-lived and free-spoken itinerants, like these, so readily pick up in their endless rambles. Girls they were too, of dark, quick, sparkling eyes, of an Italian aspect, who fagged on after their long-legged lords as fast as they were able ; talking merrily, and throwing about their *poco-curante* glances, with that peculiar expression which such a life as theirs invariably gives. The third walked silently and wearily behind. Her countenance was inclined towards the ground ; but a glimpse which I caught of its expression, filled me with sad astonishment. To my eye, her

beauty, entirely of an English character, far, very far, surpassed that of her companions. She was of a fair, delicate complexion; one of our own auburn-locked and blue-eyed beauties; but the language of her looks was that of a sensibility so singular in her situation; of a dejection so patient, yet so profound; of so utter a misery, that I was seized with an instantaneous interest about her, and exclaimed to myself: "What a woeful history is there, did one but know it!" I followed the party towards the town, and beheld the two first girls continue their march, without seeming to regard for a moment the melancholy one; while the men, far before, never cast behind them a single look, to ascertain how their help-mates followed them.

It was several days after this, that as I had been walking in my friend's garden with his fair and excellent daughter, now no more, and as we were about to enter the house, she was accosted by a little girl, whom she seemed well to know, and whose object it was to procure some article of comfort for a poor female stranger, whom she represented to be at the point of death. After listening to my fair friend's queries, and to the replies of the little girl for some time; "Edith," said I, "it is the very girl of that strolling party, I have so repeatedly spoken about within

the last few days. Let us go and see her." The words were no sooner uttered, than we were on our way; and we soon found her, and found her to be the same. She was lodged in a public-house, crowded to repletion with the vociferous frequenters of the fair; whose noise ascended, with the mingled fumes of their potations, into the small attic in which she lay—wasting away beneath the fiery power of a fever; her little apartment, in which it was difficult to move without knocking our heads against spars and beams, hot and close almost to suffocation; and inspiring a deeper sense of solitude and desertion, from the very din which reached it. To say that we instantly took measures for her comfort, and, if possible, for her recovery, is perhaps, needless; but it is more important to add, that all we saw of her, instead of merely supporting my first impression, filled us with admiration and astonishment. Independently of the beautiful and intellectual fashion of her countenance, there were a delicacy and purity of spirit, an elegant simplicity of manner, and an ardour and loftiness of sentiment, which would have prompted me to believe her of a superior rank in life, had not her situation, and her own story, proved to the contrary. That story is as follows, in words which are impressed indelibly on my memory.

“The scene of my happy infancy was a cottage, amongst the mountains of Wales, yet not far from the English border. The hills rose wildly and solitarily from the back of our abode ; and my play-ground was a slope at their feet, amongst the heather and broom and aromatic sweet-gale, which had flourished there for ages. Long vallies stretched on in different directions, through which rushed clear, rapid streams, and which were filled with extensive woods, presenting a strong and pleasant contrast with the naked heights above. My father was a woodman, and I, being his only child, was accustomed to carry his dinner, sometimes far into the forest, and often accompanied him for whole days at his employment ; playing solitarily by myself somewhere near him, doing many little things which a boy might have done for him ; or seeking and finding a multitude of wonders on the margin of a brook, or in the depths of the woodland shades. I believe this simple circumstance had a great effect upon my childish mind ; for I was said to be more a boy than a girl, in my likings : I preferred the company of the boys of the adjoining small hamlet to that of the girls. With them I delighted to ramble through the woods in their birdnesting excursions, and up into the solitudes of the hills. There was something exceedingly

animating to me, in their eager pursuit of all their objects, and in their bold, ranging spirits. I soon began to feel as if I only really enjoyed the fulness of my existence in the fresh, free air, amongst the sunny solitudes, and leaping rivulets of the mountains. It may be imagined, that neither the poverty of my parents, the seclusion of my dwelling, nor my vagrant habits, were very favourable to my acquiring much of the slight education which falls to the poor: yet my poor, dear mother did, by great perseverance, give me what she thought a tolerable accomplishment, in that triad of arts—reading, writing, and arithmetic. The only books which my parents possessed, of any value, were a Bible, a Pilgrim's Progress, and a Robinson Crusoe. In them, on Sundays and on winter evenings, I heard my father read, from year to year; and these, delightful as they were, and ten-fold delightful as they became, when I began to grow up, and to pore over them in the silence of our house, or in some hidden nook of the wilderness through the long, dreamy days of summer, combined, with the stimulus of out-of-door influences, to fill my fancy with a thousand vague dreams and wishes. I found an intense longing growing within me for I knew not what of life, and adventure, that was scattered, I knew not where, over the whole face

of the earth. It was thus that I grew till my sixteenth year; living in a world of my own imagination, but as ignorant of the real world as at the hour of my birth.

“It was now that the silence of our primitive region was disturbed by the arrival of soldiers. The little town three miles off was filled with them; and they, or the excitement they caused, penetrated into every sequestered hollow. I had never seen soldiers; except once, as I had rambled far, one summer day, among the hills, I was suddenly startled with a sound of many voices singing in chorus; and the next moment, beheld the flashing of muskets in the sun, and a long train of soldiery winding along an opposite hill, not in regular march, but sauntering carelessly along, all bearing part in some favourite song. My imagination was strongly impressed with the scene. Amongst the soldiers, however, who now visited us, was Frank Hardinge, a handsome, merry, and apparently, enthusiastic fellow. He was an excellent dancer, a player on various instruments, and especially the harp; a teller of wild and strange stories, for he had been in the Canadas, and had fought in the United States of America. In my inexperienced eyes, he was a perfect wonder; and, as he praised our picturesque region, and simplicity of life, it was to me

sufficient evidence, that his soul had feelings and speculations like my own. To be brief in a foolish story, we were married. I know not how it could be, young, simple, and ignorant as I was, that I was induced thus to forget my poor parents, thus blindly to confide in a stranger; but so, by some fatality, it was; and reflection seemed only aroused by the heartbreaking anguish into which I found I had plunged them, and by the announcement that we must depart. Then was my heart smitten with an unspeakable grief—then did I seem to have been guilty of the blackest ingratitude, to leave my parents without a child to comfort their last years. But grief and repentance could not overcome necessity. I followed my husband.

“The change, from my native mountains to a flat country,—to a town;—instead of hills, and woods, and waters, to see only streams of strange people; instead of the sweeping voice of winds, and the harmonies of nature, to hear only the din of streets, and the sounds of unknown and indifferent voices, was bad enough; but, what was far worse, I found in myself an utter incapability of attaching myself to those amongst whom I was thrown. It was in vain that I endeavoured to be sociable and communicative;

there seemed to be no subjects of common interest between us. I could not conceive how they occupied themselves with such a zest in the commonalities of daily life, without a wish or a thought beyond them. I had feelings and desires, which I could not bring them to comprehend. My words seemed to fall upon them, like water upon stones. Much of this I attributed to the effect of my country and peculiar life; but the worst discovery was, that my own imagination had invested my husband with the colours of romance; that he had no conceptions of those things which were a life within my spirit, no feeling of the beautiful in nature, no taste for reading; but that he was a volatile fellow, proud of his musical talents, and the idol of a convivial crew, with whom he spent the whole of his leisure. My heart was sore for the loss of my native hills; it was sore for the desertion of my parents, and for the solitary misery into which I had thrown myself—for ever. But one consolation was left me, in reading. Wherever we went, from town to town, in our quarters I still found books. They opened a new world to me. In them I found all my nameless desires gratified. They seemed to overflow with that very nature which, like a familiar spirit, had haunted me, and grown upon me; but which, to my sorrow

and amazement, I could find in no living thing besides. I read numbers of those excellent volumes which, by means of itinerant venders, are now scattered in multitudes through the dwellings of the poor. Travels, history, but, above all, poetry, whose voice seemed like that of my own mountains—sweet, mysterious, sublime, and awful,—and Goldsmith, Milton, and Shakspeare, my perpetual enjoyments. The two last almost rivalled in my affections that glorious book, the Bible, which my father gave me, with forgiving tears, and his blessing, when I left my natal door, and which had been my inseparable companion. They seemed *almost* equal, for I had not then sufficient expansion of mind, to comprehend the hundredth part of its magnificent poetry,—nor had sorrow yet taught me the infinitude of its promises and consolations. But I read, and was comforted, and strengthened to do my duty to my husband; and to bear, with a degree of resignation, my fate.

“But pondering, one day, on the solitude of my lot, I was struck with a terrible idea. I imagined that the beautiful mind, manifested in my favourite authors, was aroused and exalted by a fine education. The poor might possess it, but in them it was not excited, except in sufficient degree for life’s most ordinary purposes. I con-

ceived, that in me, the love and desire of knowledge were brought into a premature and extraordinary existence, by the influence of my solitary communings with the inspiring grandeur of my native scenes. How dreadful were the thoughts which this notion suggested ! The souls of the poor—those of my own natural rank, seemed to me like waters flowing beneath impenetrable ice. They seemed sealed up, as it were, from the finest impulses of our nature ; from all lofty pleasures and speculations of intellect. I, like a solitary thing, was for ever cut off from all sympathy with them ; while, on the other hand, betwixt me and all the beautiful and awakened minds of the educated and upper orders, yawned the impassable gulfs of rank and wealth, and all the pride and prejudices, which cling to them as invincibly as the lichens cling to the rocks. At that thought, my heart died within me, my strength left me,—I was seized with a dark and cruel agony, an oppression of trembling and terrible despair. I prayed that I might die,—for the prospect of life was insupportable ; and death, I trusted, would unite me to all that my soul thirsted after—knowledge, intellectual being—and the love and communion of creatures entirely embued with, and possessed by them.

“ The violence of my feelings so acted upon my

frame, that I became like one stupified, or in a dream, from which I could not wake. My domestic concerns, which I had before attended to with exactness, were neglected;—and my husband, who generally appeared well contented to think little about me, so that I ministered to his daily comfort, added to my misery by the cruelty of his language; terming me “a moping fool, and good for nothing.” By degrees, however, I recovered from the depth of this desolate stupor. A faint hope crept into my mind, that the barrier betwixt myself and some kindred mind might not be so absolute as I had deemed; and I longed, yet dreaded, to have an opportunity of seeing something of refined life. That opportunity was speedily granted me. The lady of one of our officers had lost her maid: and my husband proffered my services, till she should be suited with another. For such an office I was ill enough qualified; but I submitted, and with a trembling heart set about my duty, or rather my instruction in it. The lady was of a proud and commanding beauty and manner; highly accomplished, and possessed of a living consciousness of all her advantages of fortune, person, and education. The splendour of their apartments filled me with amazement; and when I beheld the paintings upon the walls, and had an opportunity of sur-

veying the books, engravings, and music, scattered about the drawing-room, I was struck with such an humbling sense of my own poverty and ignorance, that I sinfully wished that I had never been born. I had lately begun to think that I knew something; but the sight of books—books of such a splendour and delicacy of beauty, that their very materials seemed almost spiritual, compared with the poor, mean, and soiled ones, to which I had been accustomed,—travels, history, romance, and poetry, by names, not one of which I knew—by people evidently living,—and in such a style of rich and flowing eloquence as overwhelmed and intoxicated my wondering mind,—brought a faintness over me, like the approach of death; and I exclaimed to myself, ‘Alas! what am I!’

“One day I found, upon the dressing-table of my new mistress, the poem of Lalla Rookh. The temptation was too strong:—I opened, read, and was absorbed to perfect forgetfulness, when the lady herself entered. Her countenance exhibited surprise, but no anger, as she asked me if I really *understood* what I had been reading. I replied, ‘I did.’ ‘Then,’ said she, ‘I will find you books, as you seem fond of reading, more suited for you;’—and immediately handed me, from a closet, a volume of religious tracts, ‘The

Dairyman's Daughter,' and others, which I had once read and enjoyed. When I told her this, she questioned me about what books I *had* read ; and I enumerated a considerable number. As I proceeded, her surprise became apparent ; and suddenly turning, she said, ' Come this way.'—I followed, supposing that she was proceeding to the library ; but the next moment, she ushered me into the drawing-room, where were assembled a splendid party, exclaiming, with a tone of exultation, ' What do you think !—I have found a prodigy, a perfect *bas-bleu*, in a common soldier's wife !'—Instantly all eyes were turned, in marvelling curiosity, upon me. The unexpected suddenness of the circumstance was to me like a clap of thunder. My first impulse was to rush out,—but my limbs refused to obey my will. A deadening coldness seized me—I was rivetted to the spot. I dared not lift my eyes, lest they should meet those of the gentlemen. Their looks would have been like so many flashes of lightning ;—their merry words fell upon me like so many daggers ; but I did venture to look towards the ladies who anxiously gathered about me, hoping to behold some gentle expression of sympathy, something which might reassure. Alas ! it was in vain ! Their eyes were full of curiosity—of vivacious criticism ; and their rapid enquiries and remarks, di-

rected to my patroness, wrung me with agony. All my bitter forebodings seemed verified. I was cut off from their sympathy by the impassable barriers of rank and fortune. A poor girl, like me, might be an object of momentary interest, of fugacious wonder, but not of sisterly and affectionate sympathy. My heart beat heavily—my brain swam—a cold perspiration covered me,—and I wished that the earth might swallow me up. But, as I was ready to sink upon the floor, I casually met the glance of a lady who stood behind the group around me. Oh! that beautiful countenance! Oh, that angelic expression! It was like the realization of one of my most extravagant day-dreams. I could have rushed towards her, and have taken refuge at her feet; but at the same time, I heard her beg my patroness to allow me to retire; and the request was instantly granted. My desire was to fly from the room, but the motionless spell of a dream seemed upon me;—I was powerless as a statue. When, however, I did recover my activity, I rushed away with the impetuosity of frenzy; never stopping till I reached my lodging, where, throwing myself upon the bed, I gave myself up to the most awful paroxysm of outraged and overwrought feeling, that ever visited the human soul. Again, I sinfully, passionately prayed, that I might die.

What other wish could I indulge, who was alone in the world ;—haunted by a quenchless, burning thirst for *love* which I could never attain ; seeking, as it were, my kindred, but seeking hopelessly ?

“ It was true, that I had seen pity, tenderness, and the gentlest goodness, in the eyes of one lovely woman ; but it was probable that, being removed from her presence, she would think of me no more. I was blessedly mistaken ! That very moment, there was a slight knock at my door, and the same beautiful form entered,—the same mild and radiant countenance beamed upon me. I rose, —and precipitating myself at her feet, clasped her knees with convulsive energy, and gave vent to my feelings in sobs and tears. The dear lady, who well comprehended my nature, suffered the violence of my agitation to pass over, before she attempted to soothe me. Then, telling me not to be cast down ; that she plainly saw the excitability of my imagination and affections ; that I was in a dangerous situation, but that I must endeavour to calm myself ; and, above all, not to think hardly of those to whom I had been so abruptly introduced, who, she could assure me, *meant* well ;—she added, ‘ you shall now belong to me.’ At these words, a new life was mine !—I saw that all I panted after was before me. I sought not great things,—I only pined for the

love of some superior heart ; and I cared not what was the lowliness of the post I occupied, if I were within reach of the fellowship of mind. That day began a new existence. I found that the lady was the wife of the colonel. A finer couple never were beheld. He, frank, generous, and full of life—she, gentle, affectionate in disposition, but of a lofty purity of views truly surprising. Whatever I had dreamed of human and domestic felicity, I saw in them realized. They were highly connected in life, and did not scruple to mix in its gaieties and pleasures ; but their hearts were concentrated in each other, in their beautiful children, in their delightful home. The colonel seemed to catch inspiration from his wife. At her suggestion, every benevolent plan, however great, became to him an object of enthusiasm. My husband was immediately taken into his service, and an apartment provided for us in his house, so that I was entirely at liberty to attend to his lady.

“ This was the noon-tide of my life,—a period of perfect felicity. She soon acquainted herself with the whole character and aspirations of my mind, and spared no pains to remedy my deficiencies, and direct my views. There was no parade of patronage ; she thought nothing that I earnestly desired to learn, too good or too high for me to

know. It was one of my delightful employments to read to her for hours, as she sate at her needle ; and what did I not derive from her kind and unostentatious remarks ? But, above all, I acquired the most essential benefit from contemplation of her beautiful practical piety. Her religion was of that pure and animating kind, which threw a sunshine over every sentiment of her mind, and action of her life. It was in her no alternating system of doubts and hopes, of visions and sensations, but a bright and benignant philosophy of life ; a steady, but cordial glow of spirits, fed by the daily consciousness of the ever-present and Almighty Father, and a faith so full of the glorious destiny of the human soul, that calamity might break her heart, but could never extinguish her immortal assurance. Ah me ! how soon was all the strength of her confidence needed ! how speedily was this happy period clouded ! The regiment was ordered to Spain ; and separation and anxiety became my dear lady's portion. I will not prolong my story, by describing the alternations of joy and fear, which came with the colonel's letters. It was *my* bitter destiny, to have to struggle with a sinful and hateful hope, which, in spite of all my endeavours, and of all my prayers, still lurked at the bottom of my soul,—that Hardinge would never return. The last

news we received was that of the colonel's death. I cannot pause here.—I cannot tell how that pure, noble, and devoted creature, his wife, roused every energy of her spirit and of her religion to bear the blow, and to live for her children. She did not live long,—and while my heart was prostrated to the dust by this crowning affliction of my life, my husband returned—returned hardened and brutalized in manner, and in principle, by his foreign sojourn. Why should I proceed? I have nothing more to relate but darkness and decay.

“My protectress had left me a generous annuity—a simple, but sufficient provision for life, but it was regularly seized and squandered in riot; and, after much resistance on my part, and barbarity on his, I was compelled to follow him in his miserable career. He had received his discharge from the army, and had connected himself with some strolling people. I cannot bear to relate the life of degradation I was compelled to witness and to suffer. I cannot paint all the scenes and schemes of imposition and fraud into which I was successively dragged. It is enough, that I was one of a company of fire-eaters, of Indian jugglers, of giants and dwarfs, of endless changes and speculations equally despicable. Alas! how often, as I have entered a town, weary, dejected, and

heart-sick, and have beheld the bright windows of warm, happy homes, illuminating the twilight streets, I have pictured to myself the happiness, the knowledge, the loving fellowship, which filled them; and lamented that I was not even the lowest servant in one of them. But it might not be;—and the very beings I aspired to love, and to be loved, would, could they have seen me in my wretched habit, and wretched company, have turned from me with contempt. But the course is run.—I am now approaching that glorious country, where mind and love are the substance of existence. My track has been miserable; but I know it has not been in vain. My proud heart has been broken, and softened, and subdued; and I would not relinquish the blessed gift of soul, which has led me to pant after alliance with intellectual beauty, ‘as the hart panteth after the water brooks,’ were it to be purchased by a ten-fold fiery ordeal!”

THE TWO SQUIRES.

It was on a pleasant May morning that a gallant gentleman, Dauncey Dauncey, Esq., rode forth from his ancestral hall, and across his noble ancestral estate, on a steed which, now that horse-flesh, like other commodities, has acquired a tolerable price, might, by a knowing eye, be valued at some five hundred pounds. He was followed only by one servant, mounted, as an ignorant spectator might deem, much better than his master, having said master's great coat duly belted at his back, and beneath him a capacious pair of saddle-bags,—thus indicating—according to the simple mode of the times, before carriages were so common, or ever M'Adam was born for the civilization of

roads—that he was bound on a considerable journey. Mr. Dauncey was, indeed, “a squire of high degree:” not such an one as might possibly be found even in this day, and in more places than one, did we deem the quest profitable, who have indeed ceased “to handle the plough or the goad,” but “whose talk is of bullocks;” but he might have presented a goodly image of a knight of the golden age of chivalry,—as handsome in person, as gallant in bearing, as bold in heart, as Arthur Pendragon himself,—had it not been that, although full of lofty speculations and generous thoughts, he had no decided relish for the shock of horses, the crash of spears, or the shouting of idle people, but had much rather see a young grove of trees flourishing in the sunshine, horses bearing home the harvest, or a group of merry peasants dancing under an oak. An education of that solid and venerable splendour which then only bore the name of learning, and which then, indeed, was seldom acquired except by those ambitious of climbing high in church or State, had opened and elicited the full strength and glow of a truly noble spirit, crowning it with a dignity disdainful of everything mean, and touching it with aspirations after a thousand good deeds to his fellow-men.

He rode on, past many a substantial farm-house and snug cottage, from which came forth venerable

age, manly and womanly youth, and troops of smiling children, with bows and curtsies, and "God speed you, Sirs," and eyes that followed, till the next turn of the road hid the beloved master, who was leaving them for the mighty space of a few months. He rode on, over the open heath, fragrant with the golden-flowered furze; down the deep lane overhung with hawthorn, bending its boughs beneath their loads of snowy bloom; through woods where the clear waters ran sparkling across his path, and the sun cast his flickering beams on the stems of gigantic oaks, now clad in their fresh amber foliage, and filled with a clamour of rejoicing birds. He had a heart to feel all the beauty and gladness around him; and, as he issued from beneath the covert of the trees, on the brow of the next hill, and cast back his gaze on the wide, wooded, and beautiful track, all his own, and upon the fine old mansion, showing its manifold gables and peaked roofs in the midst, he inly exclaimed,—“Thanks be to Him who has meted me so goodly a portion! But one thing wantest thou, fair scene, to match thee with the fairest throughout merry England; and it shall go hard but this crowning charm is thine ere another winter darken thy fields, and brighten the happy hearths within thee.” He turned his horse, and rode smartly on;—and God’s blessing

go with him, while we turn back and see, as the country phrase has it, whom he left behind to "keep the house warm."

A strange fellow was there, truly—a strange companion for such a gentleman;—for he was, in a great degree, a companion. When we say, however, that they were two only sons, born heirs to two adjoining estates, who in boyhood had played together, and rambled through the woods together, together had been sent to school, and thence to college, there is explanation enough of the strangeness of their after acquaintance. Yet two more differing mortals never were born. Dixon, this said Dixon, quondam playmate, schoolmate, and now *luogo-tenente* of Dauncey Dauncey, was a tall, thin, wither-away fellow, of six feet two, with legs that occupied the centre of his oscillating boots much after the manner of a spoon in a jug. His complexion was tawny, his hair and eyes black; his body lean, and tough to the very eye; his skin had a dry and leathery look; his arms hanging long and lank by his sides. Altogether he had the air of a tall, slim tree, that, transplanted by some one ambitious of a ready-made grave about his new-built house, stands wavering though propped, half alive and half dead, and from year to year neither perishes nor grows. In word, action, and design, he was slow and drawl-

ing; yet ever and anon, a sudden flash of something like wit would burst out of him: and there was a continual gleam of a placid smile about his eyes, that struck people with wonder, and made them think there was more in him than they had given him credit for. He was one of those odd anomalies—those queer mixtures of humanity, that you never seem entirely to understand;—a creature in which there appeared an easy strife between the flat and the sharp, the fool and the knave. When about to be pronounced a dupe, out would come some evidence of cunning, which occasioned the expression, “He is no fool neither;” when about to be scorned for his heartlessness and want of principle, some burst of kindness and good-nature struck wonder dumb. The fact was, he had not enough wit to take care of himself, but sufficient wherewithal to harm anybody else seriously. At school, the only things he was known to learn were some odds-and-ends of Latin, and a connoisseurship in cats and rabbits; at the University he acquired a great proficiency in horses and their pedigrees, and made many valuable acquaintances with grooms, jockeys, and anglers; and, if he was not expelled his college, it was not because he was very tender of its rules or its reputation. Thence, however, he was suddenly called by the death of his father; and, before

Dauncey returned home, he had suffered himself to be completely gulled, in the most marvellous manner, out of all his property by sharpers. To this time it is current in that part of the country, that, on one rainy day, in a village public-house, he lost three thousand pounds and two good farms: the first by a wager on two drops of rain running down the window, the second by a bet on two bents drawn out of a hay-rick, and the third by a race between two beetles. To any other man it would have been subject of madness, or suicide; to him it scarcely appeared that of a reflection: his sleep was as sound, his shootings and anglings as regular, his jokes as frequent, as ever; and such a one as the following, food for mirth and raillery for a month. While shooting one day, his dogs turned out a hedge-hog, which he put in one pocket and his game in another, that the man who emptied the first, on his return, might confidently plunge his hand into the second, and wound it on the spines of the urchin. The scheme took full effect in presence of the assembled servants' hall, and was set down for a *chef-d'œuvre* of wit.

Such was the occupier of Dauncey's house in his absence, which was to be of several months, but, to Dixon's surprise, was scarcely of one; for, coming in one evening, whom should he see but

Dauncey sitting in his usual seat,—his father's carved and high-backed chair,—dusty, weary, and melancholy. "Heigh, and how now!" cried Dixon. There was, for some time, no answer; but, at length, Dixon's slow yet unfailing pertinacity succeeded. "A fool, Dixon, a fool!—I have only been playing the fool a little!" "Oho," quoth Dixon, rubbing his hands with glee, his tawny features brightening up, his mouth opening with a grin almost from ear to ear, as he trailed his chair after him, and took his seat by Dauncey: "Oho, a joke! Come, let us have it!" The countenance and manner of Dauncey showed very plainly enough that it was anything but a joke; yet knowing the futility of attempting resistance to the eternal battering-ram of Dixon's curiosity, he gave way at once. "If I must then confess my own folly, I thought, the other day, that I had found a lady worthy of this mansion and of your valuable friendship, Mr. Dixon." "Oho, oho," quoth Dixon, "I have it, I have it; and so she wouldn't have you, eh?" "Not exactly so," replied Dauncey. "Not so! How then? how then? Hast thou lost a good wife by some of thy scrupulous nonsense?" "Perhaps so," said Dauncey; "but let this suffice—she would and she would not; I might, and I could not." "Come now," said Dixon, "this is just what I

like. A good riddle, a good joke ! I told thee it was a good joke, didn't I ? But out with it, I pray thee ; for I can bear it no longer."

"Nor I either," rejoined Dauncey ; "so, as thou art anxious for a silly story, here it is. I found in my journey a lady who, for beauty and majesty of person, is, in my opinion, worthy of a throne,—a tall, superb, and resplendent woman, in whose presence the common race of ladies appear of a dim, dwarfed, and secondary stamp. If I was surprised and delighted with her person, I was not less astonished at the vigour and splendour of her mind. Her ideas seemed to flow from a source of crystal transparency, and, like the rays of the sun, to carry light and life with them into the world. I think I am not deficient in information ; but I know not by what means she has grasped acquirements, and amassed knowledge, that have cost me years of weary days and nights, and the aid of the greatest masters : and yet, her years, her looks, the buoyancy of her mind, the courtly elegance of her manners, render it impossible that she can have passed through much continued toil and task-work. I own to thee that I thought such a woman would be the crowning glory of my existence ; and that woman might be mine, and you ask me why she is not ? The magnificent creature is marred, dimmed, debased, and

rendered utterly worthless in my view, by two mental flaws,—a thirst, a domineering thirst of power, and a sordid ambition of wealth, though already in possession of riches. My course was smooth enough, almost stranger as I was,—the fact of my presuming to her hand was sufficient attestation of my gentility; but scarcely had I congratulated myself on the brilliancy of my prospects, when I was thrust through with an unexpected dart. ‘You have a large landed estate, Mr. Dauncey, have you not? I love land, I am a perfect agriculturist in spirit, and shall stipulate with you for a good deal of management in rural affairs.’ There was not so much in the words, Dixon; but there was a something about the tone and the spirit of them that I liked not: my amatory thermometer fell at least twenty degrees. I replied, that I was not ambitious of winning her favour by my *lands*, but by those personal and mental qualities which were more important, and of which she could form her own judgment. Land enough I had, it was true, for a modest and comfortable establishment. Dixon, I never saw the arch-fiend, flinging off the shape and lineaments of an angel of light, start up in all the malignant fearfulness of his infernality; but I have seen something like it, and my ears tingle at this moment with the shrill echo of the words, ‘Modest

and comfortable ! modest and comfortable ! Paltry, pitiful consolations of a base-born spirit ! Does any one hear those grovelling sentiments, and doubt the speaker to be fool, knave, or poverty-stricken caitiff ?' I replied not, and I am here."

" And is this all ?" cried Dixon, in unaffected amazement ; " and is this all ? Why, Dauncey, justly did she interpret thee ; for thou art a greater fool than I suspected thee to be. What ! throw up an empress of a woman in a huff, because she loves power, and splendour, and a little farming to boot ! Go to, didst thou not know she was a woman ? and immensely too good for thee is she ; and now I think of it, I am convinced she would suit me to a tittle."

If Dixon was amazed at Dauncey, Dauncey was not the less so at this speech. Raising his head for the first time, he looked full upon his lengthy friend : first with a broad stare of astonishment, then with a kindling smile, and, last of all, broke out into a laugh that rung through the house and bent him double again. " By Jove, Dixon, my vexation is gone, I know not how. I am amazed at thy spirit. Thou win the lady—the proud lady, whose soul is set, no doubt, on a style of living befitting a Dukedom, while thou hast lost every doit of thy fortune ! The great managing lady suit thee, who hast not a sod left the size of

thy shoe!’ And he laughed again louder than before; while Dixon sate by, looking quietly at him, and every now and then uttering a low note of cachinnation, more in amazement at his friend’s immoderate mirth than at any mirth of his own.

“If thou art in earnest, however,” said Dauncey, “I advise thee to lose no time. And so be it that thou pledgest thy word to tell no lies, and to do nothing unworthy of a man of honour in the case, I wish thee success, and my purse and equipage are equally at thy service.”

If Dauncey thought Dixon was but in joke, he was never more mistaken. At the word, up rose the man; with unusual activity began, *instantly*, to put things in a train; and actually, the next morning, was on his way, “a jolly wooer,” with one servant behind him, as Dauncey had gone before. Many a time did Dauncey, as he sate in his hall, or rode solitarily over his estate, in the course of the few following weeks, break out afresh in laughter at Dixon’s chivalrous speech, and at the idea of what figure he might be cutting at the moment; but let those imagine his utter and astounding amazement who can, when, in less than a month, he actually beheld a carriage drive up to his door, and out of it step the identical pair!

We permitted Dauncey to go on his pilgrimage alone, in a vain confidence that he would take care

of himself; but we must not suffer Dixon so to depart, being too bad to be trusted, and too good to be lost sight of. As he rode slowly, then, on his way, hatching in his head the modes and probabilities of his enterprise, he arrived, in the first place, at the politic conclusion, that, although bound to speak the truth, and, peradventure, nothing but the truth, yet he was under no moral obligation whatever to tell all the truth. In the second place, conning over the name, parentage, and place of abode of his Dulcinea, as given him by Dauncey, he stumbled upon the auspicious discovery that her father was no other than an old fellow-collegian of his father's, whose acquaintance had had a sort of keeping-up by a casual meeting in London, and by a message of compliments passed through the mouth of some squire errant once or twice afterwards. Therefore, in the third place, animated by these propitious circumstances, he put spurs to his horse, and was soon bowing his long back in the presence of the lady and her aged father, the sole relics of an ancient family.

It was introduction enough that the old gentleman recognised him as Mr. Dixon of Dixonholme, and gave him a most cordial old English welcome, which Dixon assured him he should feel the highest satisfaction in having the opportunity of returning at his own house,—not deeming it need-

ful, by any means, to disturb the good man's tranquillity by informing him that the son of his friend had no house, that Dixonholme was already, like the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, "gone from him." It was recommendation enough that Dixon was discovered to be a prince in the art of angling, in which the old gentleman was, at least, an enthusiast: the visit, therefore, spun out; from day to day they angled, and from eve to eve they talked of angling. The daughter looked but grimly upon the personal graces of Dixon, who, for his part, made no further attempts to propitiate her goodwill, than by his ordinary habits of gallantry, and by a lavish projection of those Latin fragments picked up at school and ever since in diurnal requisition to impress a befitting reverence upon squire and clown, and to give a classical grace to his confabulations with the parson, in whose ears they were become like so many alarums, sounded till they had ceased to be heard. He did not fail, however, to drop, on one occasion, at dinner, a short lamentation, addressed to the worthy old gentleman, on the want of a good wife, who would have both will and ability to take entirely from his shoulders the irksome charge of purse, scrip, and command, and leave him to the enjoyment of the patient mysteries of the field for which he felt himself best qualified. The hint was not lost:

“upon that hint he spake,” and was heard. He did not, it is true, although accredited as the wealthy owner of Dixonholme, and believed to be a most manageable and convenient sort of subject, escape sounding on the *extent* of his estate, and the number of his farms; to which he carelessly replied, that his estate was more extensive than most men’s, the soil was rich, and the tenants many. That so good an opportunity might not be lost on either side, a quiet wedding,—an *agreeable surprise* at home,—and, then and there, a burst of nuptial splendour and festivity, were projected. Behold, therefore, Dixon and his gorgeous bride, like the sun shining on the edge of a wane-cloud, travelling homewards in the old family chariot, by a pleasant, easy journey of three days,—he the happiest of mortals, and she more and more alive to the pliant and available nature of her good man. Amongst those piquancies which served to season their conversation on the way, not the most trivial was the anticipation of the effect of this event upon Dauncey, the poor, but proud Dauncey. On the third day, Dixon announced their approach to their journey’s end; and, on reaching the brow of a hill which shewed spread below them a fine wooded valley, stretching out his hand and spreading it abroad, he exclaimed, “All that I now see is mine!” It is true that,

observant of his word, his eyes were shut as he spoke: but, although those of the lady were open, they were too eagerly fixed on the attractive scene before her, to allow her to notice the deception; and she involuntarily ejaculated the intensity of her exultation.

It was the bright warm season of midsummer, and, as they descended through the fields, a busy scene surrounded them. Gates were thrown wide, waggons were rolling to and fro, and bands of merry people were tossing about or carrying home the hay, whose fragrance filled the whole atmosphere. There was an air of prosperity diffused over every person and thing, which inspired the lady with a suspicion that money was flowing from Dixon's easy good-nature into a multitude of pockets, and she resolved that the stream should be suitably diminished. A variety of schemes of new and economical husbandry, of improved implements, and novel machinery on the most approved construction, were floating through her philosophical brain. Already the old-fashioned forks, rakes, and carts, had given way, in her thrifty imagination, to things of a more expeditious nature;—already the farmer had lost his free will, and was condemned to the predestination of prescribed modes of cultivating his soil;—already the cottager's cow, and his half dozen sheep, were

driven from the common, which was turned to what, in the utilitarian system, is called a *good* account. There was, too, a curious mixture of merriment and respect in the salutations of the peasantry, which she attributed to the familiarity of Dixon: this was an evil also marked for abolition.

But the *dénouement* was at hand. As she walked into the hall in proud self-gratulation, the first face which she beheld was that of Dauncey. A gentle nature would have shrunk from the encounter; but hers was not of that description, and her words immediately testified it. “*Your* presence, Sir, might have awaited a more suitable time.” “*Madam,*” replied Dauncey, with a dignity and gravity which startled her, “I grieve to say, that I apprehend you to lie under a most melancholy deception. If, as appearances compel me to fear, you have been prevailed upon to marry this person through false representations, you are now to find that he is not only worthless, but pennyless.” “What! is he not Mr. Dixon of Dixonholme?” “He is, truly, Mr. Dixon; but this is not Dixonholme, nor is that manor now his property.” At these words a host of dreadful passions spread over her features a deathly hue, and shook with convulsive tremblings her frame from head to foot; but she stood, and struggling fiercely with her

tyrannous feelings for the mastery, exclaimed, "Wretches! have you dared to practise upon me your infernal conspiracy? and thou," turning to Dixon, "detestable monster! where is that estate thou boastedst of as more extensive than most men's?" "It is in the church-yard," coolly replied Dixon; "and it is true, most men have but five feet ten of earth that can truly be called their own, and I have six feet two; and I still maintain that the soil is rich, and that the tenants are many."

Most of this sage interpretation was lost upon the bride; for the violence of her agitation had terminated in hysterical insensibility. Dauncey, truly grieved for the unfortunate woman, selfish and selfishly ambitious as she was, exerted himself for her recovery, at the same time upbraiding Dixon with neglect of his pledge, who sate himself quietly down to see the result, only replying to Dauncey's charges, with "I've told no lies, Dauncey, I've told no lies!" But the lady revived—started up with the air and attitude of a fury—rushed from the house—mounted her carriage, and drove off. One glance only she cast back as she departed; and in that she beheld Dixon standing at the door, with a complacent grin on his countenance, and his long, lank figure nearly propping the lofty lintel.

Many years after this remarkable event, a gentleman passing near Mrs. Dixon's ancestral residence, made some inquiries on the subject of this history ; and, strange as it may appear, he found that Dixon and his wife were living quietly together there :—he the same creature of fowling-pieces, fishing-rods, fragmental Latinity, and choice companionship,—

“ Murmuring by the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own,”—

in all else a perfect nonentity, his will never consulted, his name scarcely ever mentioned, even by their own work-people : but that of Madam Dixon a word of power, fear, and dominion, and herself one of those omnipotent personages without whose interference not a road is levelled, nor a corner of a field cut off, nor a poor man presumes to alter his pigstye ; and at whose presence, as we believe Dr. Southey somewhere says, the household spaniel tucks its tail between its legs and sneaks out of the room.

It is suspected that her conviction of Dauncey's having planned this marriage, was the salvation of Dixon, she being conscious that, if such was the truth, the greater her manifested mortification, the more triumphant his revenge. Of Dauncey's

future history, we have not been able to learn any particulars ; but we hold him firmly to have been a man to whom a disingenuous stratagem was an impossibility.

THE
ENGLISH PEASANT.

THE ENGLISH PEASANT is generally reckoned a very simple, monotonous animal, and most people, when they have called him a clown, or a country hob, think they have described him. If you see a picture of him, he is a long, silly-looking-fellow, in a straw hat, a white slop, and a pair of ankle-boots, with a bill in his hand—just as the London artist sees him in the juxta-metropolitan districts—and that is the English Peasant. They who have gone further into England, however, than Surrey, Kent, or Middlesex, have seen the English Peasant in some different costume, under a good many different aspects; and they who will take the trouble to recollect what they have heard of him, will find him a rather multifarious creature.

He is in truth a very Protean personage. What is he, in fact? A day-labourer, a woodman, a ploughman, a wagoner, a collier, a worker in railroad and canal-making, a game-keeper, a poacher, an incendiary, a charcoal-burner, a keeper of village ale-houses, and Tom-and-Jerrys; a tramp; a pauper, pacing sullenly the court-yard of a Parish Union, or working in his frieze-jacket on some parish farm; a boatman, a road-side stone-breaker, a quarry-man, a journeyman bricklayer, or his clerk, a shepherd, a drover, a rat-catcher, a mole-catcher, and half a hundred other things, in any one of which he is as different from the sheepish, straw-hatted, ankle-booted, and bill-holding fellow of the print-shop windows, as a Cockney is from a Newcastle keelman.

In the matter of costume only, every different district presents him in a different shape. In the counties round London, east and westward, through Berkshire, Hampshire, Wiltshire, &c., he is the *white-slopped* man of the London prints, with a longish rosy-cheeked face, and a stupid, quiet manner. In Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, and in that direction, he sports his *olive-green* slop, and his wide-awake, larking-hat, bit-o'-blood, or whatever else the hatters call those round-crowned, turned-up-brimmed felts of eighteen-pence or two shil-

lings cost, which have of late years so wonderfully taken the fancy of the country chaps. In the midland counties, especially Leicestershire, Derby, Nottingham, Warwick, and Staffordshire, he dons a *blue slop*, styled the Newark frock, which is finely gathered in a square piece of puckermment on the back and breast, on the shoulders, and at the wrists; is greatly adorned in those parts also with flourishes of white thread, and invariably has a little white heart stitched in at the bottom of the slit at the neck. A man would not think himself a man if he had not one of these slops, which are the first things he sees at a market or a fair, hung aloft at the end of the slop-vender's stall, on a crossed pole, and waving about like scare-crows in the wind.

Under this, he generally wears a coarse blue jacket, a red or yellow shag waistcoat, stout blue worsted stockings, tall, laced ankle-boots, and corduroy breeches, or trousers. A red handkerchief round his neck is his delight, with two good long ends dangling in front. In many other parts of the country, he wears no slop at all, but a corduroy or fustian jacket with capacious pockets, and buttons of giant size.

That is his every-day, work-a-day style, but see him on a Sunday or a holiday; see him turn out

to church, or wake, or fair,—there's a *beau* for you. If he has not his best slop on, which has never yet been defiled by touch of labour, he is conspicuous in his blue, brown, or olive-green coat, and waistcoat of some glaring colour,—scarlet, or blue, or green striped, but it must be showy; and a pair of trousers, generally blue, of a width ample as a sailor's nearly, and not only guiltless of the foppery of being strapped down, but if he find the road rather dirty, or the grass dewy, they are turned up three or four inches at the bottom so as to show the white lining. On those days, he has a hat of a modern shape, that has very lately cost him four-and-sixpence, and, if he fancies himself rather handsome, or stands well with the women, he cocks it a little on one side, and wears it with a knowing air. He wears the collar of his coarse shirt up on a holiday, and his flaming handkerchief round his neck puts forth dangling ends of an extra length, like streamers. The most troublesome business of a full dress day is to know what to do with his hands. He is dreadfully at a loss where to put them. On other days, they have plenty of occupation with their familiar implements, but to-day they are miserably sensible of a vacuum; and, except he be very old, he wears no gloves. They are sometimes diving into his trouser-pockets, sometimes in his waistcoat-pockets, and

at others in his coat-pockets behind, turning his flaps out like a couple of tails.

The great remedy of this inconvenience is a stick, or a switch ; and in the corner of his cottage, between the clock-case and the wall, you commonly see a stick of a description that indicates its owner. It is an ash plant with a face cut on its knob, or a thick hazel which a woodbine has grown tightly round, and raised on it a spiral serpentine swelling ; or it is a switch that is famous for cutting off the heads of thistles, docks, and nettles, as he stalks along.

The women, in their paraphernalia, generally bear a nearer resemblance to their sisters of the neighbouring towns ; the village dress-makers undertaking to put them in the very newest fashion, which means the newest that has reached that part of the country ; and truly were it not for the genuine country manner in which their clothes are thrown on, they might pass very well too at the market.

But the old men and old women, they are of the ancient world truly. There they go, tottering and stooping along, to church. It is now their longest journey. The old man leans heavily on his stout stick. His thin white hair covers his shoulders ; his coat, with large steel buttons, and a square-cut collar, has an antique air. His breeches are of

leather, and worn bright with age, standing up at the knees like the lid of a tankard, and his loose shoes have large steel buckles. By his side comes on his old dame, with her little old-fashioned black bonnet ; her gown, of a large flowery pattern, pulled up through the pocket-hole, shewing a well-quilted petticoat, black stockings, high-heeled shoes, and large buckles also. She has on a black mode cloak, edged with old-fashioned lace, carefully darned ; or, if winter, her warm red cloak with a narrow edging of fur down the front. You see in fancy the oaken chest in which that drapery has been kept for the last half century, and you wonder who is to wear it next. Not their children—for the fashions of this world are changed ; they must be cut down into primitive raiment for the grandchildren.

But who says the English Peasant is dull and unvaried in his character ? To be sure, he has not the wild wit, the voluble tongue, the reckless fondness for laughing, dancing, carousing, and shillalying of the Irish Peasant ; nor the grave plodding habits and intelligence of the Scotch one. He may be said to be, in his own phraseology, “ betwixt and between.” He has wit enough when it is wanted ; he can be merry enough when there is occasion ; he is ready for a row when his blood is well up ; and he will take to his

book if you will give him a schoolmaster. What is he indeed but the rough block of English character? Hew him out of the quarry of ignorance, dig him out of the slough of everlasting labour, chisel him, and polish him, and he will come out whatever you please. What is the stuff that your armies have chiefly been made out of but this English Peasant? How many of them have been carried off to man your fleets, and when they come to shore again were no longer the simple slouching Simons of the village, but jolly tars, with rolling gait, quid in mouth, glazed hats with crowns of one inch high, and brims of five wide; and as much glib slang and glib money to treat the girls with as any Jack of them all?

Cowper has drawn a capital picture of the ease and perfection with which the clownish chrysalis may be metamorphosed into the scarlet moth of war. Catch the animal young, and you may turn it into any shape that you please. He will learn to wear silk stockings, scarlet plush breeches, collarless coat with silver buttons, and swing open a door with a grace, or stand behind my lady's carriage with his wand, as smoothly impudent as any of the tribe; clerk it with a pen behind his ear, or mount a pulpit as Stephen Duck did, if you will only give him the chance. The fault is not in him: it is in Fortune. He has rich fallows

in his soul, if anybody thought them worth turning. But keep him down, and don't press him too hard. Feed him pretty well, and give him plenty of work, and, like one of his companions, the cart-horse, he will drudge on till the day of his death. So, in the north of England, where they give him a cottage and his food, and keep no more of his species than will just do the work, letting all the rest march off to the Tyne collieries, he is a very patient creature; and if they did not shew him books, would not wince at all. So in the fens of Lincolnshire, Cambridge, and Huntingdon, and on many a fat and clayey level in England, where there are no resident gentry, and but here and there a farm, you may meet the English Peasant in his most sluggish and benumbed condition. He is then a long-legged staring creature, considerably "lower than the angels," who gapes when you ask him a question, like an Indian frog, which when its mouth is open has its head half off, and neither understands your language, nor if he did, could grasp your ideas. He is there a walking lump, a thing with eyes and ears, arms and legs, but with a soul as stagnant as one of his own dykes. There never was any need of his mind, and therefore it has never been minded. All that has been wanted in him is

good, sturdy limbs, to plough and sow, reap and mow, and feed bullocks ; and even in those operations his sinews have been half superseded by machinery.

This is the English Peasant where there is nobody to breathe a spirit into the clod. But what is he where there are thousands of the wealthy and the wise ? What is he round London, the great, the noble, and the enlightened ? Pretty much the same, and from pretty much the same causes. Few trouble themselves about him. He feels that he is a mere serf amongst the great and free ; a mere machine in the hands of the mighty who use him as such. He sees the sunshine of grandeur, but he does not feel its warmth. He hears that the great folks are wise, but all he knows is that their wisdom does not trouble itself about his ignorance. He asks, with " The Farmer's Boy,"

" Whence comes this change, ungracious, irksome, cold ?
Whence this new grandeur that my eyes behold ?
The widening distance that I daily see—
Has wealth done this ?—then wealth's a foe to me,
Foe to our rights, that leaves a powerful few . . .
The paths of emulation to pursue."

Beneath the overwhelming sense of his position
—that he belongs to a neglected, despised caste—

he is, in the locality alluded to, truly a dull fellow. That the peasant there is not an ass or a sheep, you only know by his standing on end. You hear no strains of country drollery, of no characters of curious or eccentric humour—all is dull, plodding, and lumpish.

But go forth, my masters, to a greater distance from the luminous capital of England; get away into the midland and more northern localities, where the pride of greatness is not so palpably before the poor man's eyes; where the peasantry and the villagers are numerous enough to keep one another in countenance; and there you shall find the English Peasant a "happier and a wiser man." Sunday schools, and village day-schools, give him, at least, the ability to read the Bible. There the peasant feels that he is a man. He speaks in a broad dialect, indeed, but he is a "fellow of infinite jest." Hear him in the hay-field, in the corn-field; at the harvest supper, or by the village alehouse fire: if he be not very refined, he is, nevertheless, a very independent fellow. Like the judge at Derby, when Johnny Darbyshire replied bluntly, "I'st niver oss,"—you might not understand his words, but you would have no hesitation about their spirit when interpreted. Look at the man, indeed! None of your long, lanky fellows, with a sheepish visage; but

a sturdy, square-built chap, propped on a pair of legs that have self-will and the spirit of Hampden in them, as plain as the ribs of the grey worsted stockings that cover them. What thews, what sinews, what a pair of *calves*! Why, they more resemble a couple of full-grown *bulls*! See to his salutation as he passes any of his neighbours; hear it. Does he touch his hat, and bow his head, and look on the ground, as the great man goes by in his carriage? No; he looks him full in the face, with a fearless but respectful gaze, and bolts from his manly breast a hearty "Good day to ye, sir." To his honest neighbour, and equal in worldly matters, he extends his broad hand, and gives him a shake that is felt to the bottom of the heart:—"Well, and how are ye, John? and how's Molly, and all the little ankle-biters? And how goes the pig on, and the garden, eh?"

Let me hear the dialogue of those two brave fellows; there is the soul of England's brightest days in it. I am sick of slavish poverty on the one hand, and callous pride on the other. I yearn for the sound of language breathed from the lungs of humble independence, and the hearty, earnest greetings of poor but warm-hearted men, as I long for the breeze of the mountains or the sea. Oh! I doubt much of this

"Bold peasantry, a country's pride"

is lowered in its tone both of heart-wholeness, boldness, and affection, by the hard times and hard measures that have passed over every district, even the most favoured; or why all these emigrations, and why all these parish unions? What then, is not the English Peasant what he was? If I went amongst them where I used to go, should I not find the same merry groups seated amongst the sheaves, or under the hedge-rows, full of laughter, and full of droll anecdotes of all the country round? Should I not hear of the farmer who never wrote but one letter in his life, and that was to a gentleman forty miles off; who, on opening it, and not being able to puzzle out more than the name and address of his correspondent, mounted his horse in his vexation, and rode all the way to ask the farmer to read the letter himself; and he could not do it—could not read his own writing? Should I not hear Jonathan Moore, the stout old mower, rallied on his address to the bull when it pursued him till he escaped into a tree? How Jonathan, sitting across a branch, looked down with the utmost contempt on the bull, and endeavoured to convince him that he was a bully and a coward? “My! what a vapouring coward art thou! Where’s the fairness, where’s the equalness of the match? I tell thee,

my heart's good enough; but what's my strength to thine?"

Should I not once more hear the hundred-times-told story of Jocky Dawes and the man who sold him his horse? Should I not hear these, and scores of such anecdotes, that show the simple life of the district, and yet have more hearty merriment in them than much finer stories in much finer places? Hard times and hard measures may have quenched some of the ancient hilarity of the English Peasant, and struck a silence into lungs that were wont to "crow like chanticleer;" yet will I not believe but that in many a sweet and picturesque district, on many a brown moorland, in many a far-off glen and dale of our wilder and more primitive districts, where the peasantry are almost the sole inhabitants, whether shepherds, labourers, hewers of wood, or drawers of water,

"The ancient spirit is not dead."

That homely and loving groups gather round evening fires beneath low and smoky rafters, and feel that they have labour and care enough, as their fathers had, but that they have the pride of homes, hearts, and the sweetness of mutual sympathy, still. Let England take care that these are the portion of the English Peasant; and he

will never cease to show himself the noblest peasant on the face of the earth. Is he not that, in his patience of penury with him, and old age and the Union before him? Is he not that when his landlord has given him his sympathy? When he has given him AN ALLOTMENT—who so grateful, so industrious, so provident, so contented, and so respectable?

The English Peasant has in his nature all the elements of the English character. Give him ease, and he is readily pleased; wrong him, and who so desperate in his rage?

In his younger days, before the care of a family weighs on him, he is a clumsy, but a very light-hearted creature. To see a number of young country fellows get into play together, always reminds one of a quantity of heavy cart-horses turned into a field on a Sunday. They gallop, and kick, and scream: there is no malice, but a dreadful jeopardy of bruises and broken ribs. Their play is truly called horse-play. It is all slaps and bangs, tripping-up, tumbles, and laughter. But, to see the young peasant in his glory, you should see him hastening to the Michaelmas fair, statute, bull-roasting, or mop. He has served his year; he has his money in his pocket, his sweetheart on his arm, or he is sure to meet her at the fair. Whether he goes again to his old

place or a new one, he will have a week's holiday. Thus, on Michaelmas day, he and all his fellows, all the country over, are let loose, and are on the way to the fair: the houses are empty of them; the highways are full of them. There they go, streaming along, lads and lasses in all their finery, and with a world of laughter and loud talk. See, here they come flocking into the market-town! And there, what preparations for them: shows, strolling theatres, stalls of all kinds bearing clothes of all kinds, knives, combs, queen-cakes, and gingerbread, and a hundred inventions to lure those hard-earned wages out of his fob. And he does not mean to be stingy to-day. He will treat his lass, and buy her a new gown into the bargain. See, how they go rolling on together! He holds up his elbow sharply by his side, she thrusts her arm through his, *up to the elbow*, and away they go, a walking miracle that they can walk together at all. As to keeping step, that is out of the question; but besides this, they wag and roll about in such a way, that keeping their arms tightly linked, it is amazing they don't pull off one or the other. But they don't. They shall see the shows, and stand all in a crowd before them with open eye, and open mouths, wondering at the beauty of the dancing women, and their gowns all over spangles, and at all the wit, and

grimaces and summersets of harlequin and clown. They shall have a merry dinner, and a dance, like a dance of elephants and hippopotami, and then—

“ To-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new.”

And these are the men that become sullen and desperate: that become poachers and incendiaries. How, and why? It is not plenty and kind words that make them so. What then? What makes the wolves herd together, and descend from the Alps and the Pyrenees? What makes them desperate and voracious, blind with fury, and reveling in revenge? Hunger and hardship! When the English Peasant is gay, at ease, well fed and well clothed, what cares he how many pheasants are in a wood, or ricks in a farmer's yard? When he has a dozen backs to clothe, and a dozen mouths to feed, and nothing to put on the one, and little to put in the other,—then that which seemed a mere playful puppy suddenly starts up a snarling red-eyed monster!—How sullen he grows! With what equal indifference he shoots down pheasants or game-keepers. How the man, who so recently held up his head and laughed aloud, now sneaks, a villanous fiend, with the dark lantern and the match, to his neighbour's rick! Monster! can this be the English Peasant? 'Tis the same!

'Tis the very man ! But what has made him so ?
What has thus demonized, thus infuriated, thus
converted him into a walking pestilence ? Villain
as he is, is he alone to blame—or is there another ?

THE

FARMER'S DAUGHTER.

THERE'S a world of buxom beauty flourishing in the shades of the country. Farm-houses are dangerous places. As you are thinking only of sheep, or of curds, you may be suddenly shot through by a pair of bright eyes, and melted away in a bewitching smile that you never dreamt of till the mischief was done. In towns, and theatres, and thronged assemblies of the rich and the titled fair, you are on your guard; you know what you are exposed to, and put on your breast-plates, and pass through the most deadly onslaught of beauty—safe and sound. But in those sylvan retreats, dreaming of nightingales, and hearing only the lowing of oxen, you are taken by surprise. Out

steps a fair creature, crosses a glade, leaps a stile ; you start, you stand,—lost in wonder and astonished admiration ; you take out your tablets to write a sonnet on the return of the nymphs and dryades to earth, when up comes John Tompkins, and says, “ It’s only the Farmer’s Daughter ! ” What ! have farmers such daughters now-a-days ? Yes. I tell you they have such daughters—those farm-houses are dangerous places. Let no man with a poetical imagination, which is but another name for a very tindery heart, flatter himself with fancies of the calm delights of the country ; with the serene idea of sitting with the farmer in his old-fashioned chimney corner, and hearing him talk of corn and mutton—of joining him in the pensive pleasures of a pipe, and brown jug of October ; of listening to the gossip of the comfortable farmer’s wife ; of the parson and his family, of his sermons and his tenth pig—over a fragrant cup of young hyson, or lapt in the delicious luxuries of custards and whipt-creams : in walks a fairy vision of wondrous witchery, and with a curtesy and a smile, of most winning and mysterious magic, takes her seat just opposite. It is the Farmer’s Daughter ! A lively creature of eighteen. Fair as the lily, fresh as May-dew, rosy as the rose itself ; graceful as the peacock perched on the pales there by the window ; sweet as a posy of violets and “ clove-gillivers ; ” modest

as early morning, and amiable as your own imagination of *Desdemona* or *Gertrude of Wyoming*. You are lost ! It's all over with you. I wouldn't give an empty filbert, or a frog-bitten strawberry, for your peace of mind, if that glittering creature be not as pitiful as she is fair. And that comes of going into the country, out of the way of vanity and temptation ; and fancying farm-houses only nice old-fashioned places of old-fashioned contentment !

Ay, many a one has found, to his sorrow, what trusting himself amongst barrel-churns, and rows of bee-hives has cost him. His resolutions of bachelor independence have been whirled round and round, and resolved themselves into melted butter ; he has been stung by the queen-bee, in the eye, and has felt all over pangs and twinges, as if the whole swarm had got into his bosom. Then has come a desperate liking to that part of the country ; the taking that neat cottage just out of the village, with its honeysuckle porch, and willow harbour by the brook ; the sauntering down the foot-path that leads past the farm of a summer's evening, with a book of poetry in the hand ; the seat on the stile at the bottom of the wood ; the sudden looking-up—"How sweet that farm-house *does* look ! What fine old trees those *are* about it ! And that dear little window in the old gable,

with its open casement and its diamond panes. And, oh ! surely ! yes—that is Anne herself, and I think she is looking this way !”

Then follow the sweetest walks down by the mill ; the sweetest moonlight leaps over the sunk fence at the bottom of the garden ; the most heavenly wanderings along that old quince walk—such vows ! such poetry of passion ! such hopes and promises of felicity ! and then the old farmer looks over the hedge, and says, “ Who’s there ?” There, this is a pretty go ! Off goes Anne like the spirit of a young lamplighter, up the garden, through the house, up the stairs at three strides, and there she is, locked and bolted in that dear little chamber, with the little diamond window in the old gable. She has sunk into a chair (it is a very soft one, cushioned comfortably all round, seat, back, and elbows), and very wet is that white cambric handkerchief which she holds to her eyes.

But where is Captain Jenkinson ? Oh ! he’s there !—and he’s too bold and too true a lover to fly or sneak. There they stand, face to face, in the moonlight, the tall, slim Captain Jenkinson, and the tall, stout Farmer Field, with his huge striped waistcoat, ready to burst with hurry and indignation, and his great stick in his hand. “ What, is that you, captain ? My eye ! What ! was that you a talking to our Anne ?” “ Yes, friend Field,

it is I ; it is the captain, that was talking to your adorable Anne ; and here I am ready to marry her with your consent, for never shall woman be my wife but your charming Anne !”

How that great elephant of a farmer stands lifting up his face, and laughing in the moonlight ! How that “ fair round *corporation*, with good capon lined ” (good Shakspeare, pardon our verbal variation in this quotation, in courtesy to the delicacy of modern phrases)—how those herculean limbs do shake with laughter ! But, now, as the tears stream down his face, he squeezes the youth’s hand, and says, “ Who could have thought it, captain—eh ? Ha ! ha ! Well, we’re all young and foolish once in our lives—but come ! no more on’t—it won’t do, captain, it won’t do !”

“ Won’t do ! won’t do ! why shouldn’t it do, farmer, why shouldn’t it do ?” “ Why, becos it won’t, and that’s why ;—a captain and old Farmer Field’s lass—ha ! ha ! What will Lady Jenkinson say—eh ? What’ull that half-a-dozen of old guardians say—eh ? The Honourable Captain Jenkinson and the daughter of old Farmer Field ! What’ull they say—eh ? Say I’m a cunning old codger ; say I’ve trapped you, belike. No, no—they shan’t say so, not a man-jack of ’em. Not one of the breed, seed, and generation of ’em, shall say old Farmer Field palmed his daughter on a gentle-

man for his houses and his lands. No, Anne's a tight lass, and John Wright will come at the right time; and when you're married to my lady Fitz-somebody, and Anne's got the right man, come down, captain, and kill us a pheasant, and set up your horses and your dogs here, and we'll have a regular merry do, and another good laugh at our youthful follies!"

But all won't do. The captain vows he'll shoot all the old guardians of a row, and tell his mother to shoot him, if they make any opposition; and the very same night he sticks a note on the top of his fishing-rod, and taps with it at Anne's little window, with the diamond panes, in the old gable; and Anne, jumping from the easy chair, looks out, seizes the paper, clasps her hands, casts down a most affectionate but inconsolable look, and sighs an eternal adieu!—then flying to read the note, finds the captain vowing that "she may cheer up, all *shall* go right, or that he will manfully drown himself in the mill-dam."

Now, there is a pretty situation of affairs! and all that through incautiously wandering into the country, of a summer's evening, and getting into one of these old-fashioned farm-houses. It would serve them all right to leave them in their trouble. It might act as a warning to others, and place the dangers of the country in their genuine light. But

as the captain would be almost certain to drown himself, he is so desperate (and then there must be a coroner's inquest, and we might, at a very inconvenient moment, be called up to serve upon it) we will for this once let things pass—all *shall* be right. The guardians relent, because they can't help themselves. Lady Jenkinson bounces a good bit, but like all bodies of a considerable specific gravity, she comes down again. The adorable Anne is not drowned in her own pocket-handkerchief, though she has been very near it; and "The Times" announces, that the Honourable Charles Jenkinson, of the Light Dragoons, was married on the 7th instant, to Anne Louisa, the only daughter of Burley Field, Esq., of Sycamore Grange, Salop.

- Merciful as we have been to this young and handsome couple, we think we have not failed to indicate dangers of no trivial description, that haunt the bush in England, though there be no lions; dangers out of which others may not probably so easily come; for, without a joke, the Farmer's Daughter in the bloom of youth, is not to be carelessly approached. She can sing like a Syren, and is as dangerous as Circe in her enchanted island.

It is not to be inferred, however, that all farmer's daughters are like Anne Field. Plentifully

as Providence has scattered beauty and good sense through our farms and granges, both these and other good things are given with a difference. There are such things amongst farmers' daughters as ranks, fortunes, educations, dispositions, abilities, and tastes, in as much variety as any lover of variety can desire. There are farmers of all sorts, from the duke to the man of twenty acres; and, of course, there are farmers' daughters of as many degrees. There is a large class of gentlemen-farmers—men of estates and large capitals, who farm their two or three thousand acres, like some of the great corn-farmers of Northumberland; live in noble large houses, and keep their carriage and livery servants. Of course, the daughters of these, and such as these, are educated just the same, and have all the same habits and manners as any other young ladies. It is neither Cobbett, nor any other contemner of boarding-schools, and such "scimmy-dish things," that will persuade these damsels to leave the carriage for the tax-cart, the piano for the spinning-wheel, nor the fashionable novel for the cook's oracle. They will "stand by their order" as stoutly as Lord Grey himself.

Yet, if any body wishes to see the buxom, but housewifely, Farmer's Daughter, that is not afraid "to do a hand's-char," that can scour a pail, make a cheese, churn your butter—fresh as the day and

golden as the crow-flower on the lea ; can make the house look so clean and cheery that the very cat purrs on the hearth, and the goldfinch sings at the door-cheek the more blithely for it ; can throw up a hay-cock, or go to market, as well as her grandmother did ; why, there are plenty of such lasses yet, spite of all crinkum-crankums and fine-finguredness of modern fashion. Haven't you seen such, north and south ? Haven't you met them on single horses, or on pillions, on market-days, in Devon and in Cornwall ? Haven't you danced with them on Christmas-eves in Derbyshire or Durham ?

There are some specimens of human nature, that not all the fashions or follies of any age can alter or make new-fashioned. They are born old-fashioned. They have an old head on young shoulders, and they can't help it if they would. You might as soon turn a wheelbarrow into a chariot, or an ass into an Arabian steed. There is Dolly Cowcabbage now, what can you make of her ? Her father farms eighty acres, and milks half-a-dozen cows. He has nobody but her, and he has saved a pretty bit of money. Dolly knows of it, too. Her mother died when she was only about fourteen, and Dolly from that day began to be her father's little maid ; left her play on the village-green, and her village playfellows, and began

to look full of care. She began to reap, and wash, and cook, and milk, and make cheese. It is many a year since she has done all those things entirely for the house. Those who know her, say "she has not thriven an inch in height" since that day, but she has grown in bulk. She is like a young oak that got a shock from a thunder-bolt in its youth, or had its leading branch switched off by some Jerry Diddle or other as he went past to plough, and has ever since been stunted, and has run all into stem. She is "a little runting thing," the farmers say; a little stout-built plodding woman, with a small, round rosy face. She is generally to be seen in a linsey-wolsey petticoat, a short striped bed-gown or kirtle, and a greenish-brownish kerchief carefully placed on her bosom. She is scouring pails with a wisp of straw and wet sand, and rearing them on a stone bench, by the door, to dry and sweeten; or she is calling her cows up, by blowing on a long horn; or calling her father and the men to their meals, out of the distant fields, by knocking with a pebble on a pail bottom. She is coming out of the fold-yard with the milk-pail on her head, or she is seated by the clean-hearth, busy with her needle, making a pillow-case to hold the feathers she has saved.

Such is Dolly Cowcabbage. She has had offers: men know what's what, though it be in a homely

guise ; but she only gives a quiet smile, and always says " No ! I shall never marry while father lives ! " Those who don't like " sour grapes " begin now to say, Marry ! no ! Dolly ' ull never marry. There always was an old look about her ; there's the old maid written all over her—any body may see that with half an eye ; why, and she's thirty now, at least." But Dolly knows what she knows. There is a homely, close, plodding sort of a chap, that lives not far off—Tim Whetstone. He farms his fifty acres of his own. He has nobody in the house with him but an old woman, his housekeeper, who is as deaf as a bolt, and has a hundred and thirty guineas, of old gold, wrapped in an old stocking, and put into a dusty bee-hive that stands on her bead's head. Tim knows of that, too, though the old woman thinks nobody knows of it. She has neither kith nor kin, and when the lumbago twinges her as they sit by the fire, she often says, " Tim, lad, I shall not trouble thee long, and then what two-three old traps I have ' ull be thine." Tim is certain, before long, to find honey in the old hive ; and he has been seen, sly as he is, more than once, coming over the fields in the dusk of the evening, in a very direct line towards old Farmer Cowcabbage's house. *He* says, that it was only to seek a lamb that he had missed. But when somebody asked him if it was the same lamb that

he was looking after so earnestly in church last Sunday, Tim blushed, and said, "All fools think other people like themselves," and so went away. If the old woman should drop off, I should not be very much surprised to see these two farms thrown into one, and old Samuel Cowcabbage having a bed set up in the parlour at Tim's. In the mean time Dolly goes to market with her maund* of butter, as regularly as Saturday comes. She makes eighteen ounces to the pound, and will have the topmost price. Beautiful cream cheeses, too, Dolly manufactures; and if any one attempts to banter her down in her price, Dolly is just as quiet, as firm, as smiling, and as ready with her—"No," as she was to her sweethearts. If I were to prophesy, it would be, that Dolly will marry and have half-a-dozen children yet, as sturdy and as plodding as Tim and herself; but there is no knowing. She tells Tim they are very well as they are—she can wait; and the truth of the matter is, they have kept company these ten years already.

A very different damsel is Miss Nancy Farley. She is the Farmer's Daughter in quite another style. Nancy's father is a farmer of the rough old school. He has none of the picturesque or the old-fashioned sentimental about him. He is a big,

* A basket with two lids.

boorish, loud-talking, work-driving fellow, that is neither noted for his neatness in house, nor farm, nor person; for his knowledge, nor his management. He is just one of those who rough it along, get a crop, though there are plenty of weeds in it; have the miller complaining that their wheat is not winnowed very clean, and the butcher that their sheep died but badly; yet, that get along, pay their rent, lay something up, and, by mere dint of a hard face, a hard hand, and a hard conscience, do as well and better than scores.

Nancy's father farms his two hundred acres, and yet there's a slovenly look about his premises; and Nancy has grown up pretty much as she pleased. As a girl, she romped and climbed, and played with the lads of the village. She swung on gates, and rode on donkies. When ten or twelve years old, she would ride bareback, and astride, with a horse to water, or to the blacksmith's shop. She thrashed the dogs, fetched in the eggs, suckled the calves, and then mounted on the wall of the garden, with her long chesnut hair hanging wild on her shoulders, and a raw carrot in her hand, which she was ready either to devour or to throw at any urchin that came in sight.

Such was Miss Nancy Farley in those days, but her only appellations then were Nan and Nance. Nance Farley was the true name of the wild and fearless creature. But Nance was sent for by an

aunt at a distance; she was away five years; she was at length almost forgotten, and only remembered when it was necessary to call any girl as "wild as Nan Farley:" when lo! she made her appearance again, and great was the wonder. Could this be the gipsyish, unkempt, and graceless Nance Farley? This bright and buxom young lady in the black hat, and blue riding-habit? This fine young creature, with a shape like a queen, and eyes like diamonds? Yes, sure enough it was her—now Miss Nancy Farley indeed.

Miss Nancy's aunt had determined that she should have what is called "a bringing up." She had sent her to a boarding-school; and whatever were Miss Nancy's accomplishments, it was clear enough that she was one of the very handsomest women that ever set foot in the parish. The store of health and vigour that she had laid up in her Tom-boy days, might be seen in her elastic step, and cheek—fresh as the cheek of morning itself. She was something above the middle size, of a beautiful figure, and a liveliness of motion that turned all eyes upon her. Her features were extremely fine; and her face had a mixture of life, archness, freedom, and fun, in it, that was especially attractive, and especially dangerous to look upon. Her eyes were of half-a-dozen different colours, if half-a-dozen different people might be believed; but, in truth, they were of some dark

colour, that was neither black nor brown, nor grey, nor hazel ; but one thing was certain, they were most speaking, and laughing, and beautiful eyes, and those long flying locks were now, by some gracious metamorphosis, converted into a head of hair that was of the richest auburn, and was full enough of a sunny light to dazzle a troop of beholders.

Miss Nancy had enough of the old leaven in her to distinguish her from the general run of ladies, with her staid and quiet demeanour. She was altogether a dashing woman. She rode a beautiful light chestnut mare, with a switch tail, and her brother Ben, who was now grown up, with the ambition of cutting a figure as a gay blade of a farmer, was generally her cavalier. She hunted, and cleared gates and ditches to universal amazement. Everybody was asking, "Who *is* that handsome girl, that rides like an Arab?" Miss Nancy danced, and played, and sung; she had a wit as ready as her looks were sweet, and all the hearts of the young farmers round were giddy with surprise and delight. Miss Nancy was not of a temper to hide herself in the shade, or to shun admiration. She was at the race, at the fair, at the ball; and everywhere she had about her a crowd of admirers, that were ready to eat one another with envy and jealousy. The young squire cast his eyes upon

her, and lost no time in commencing a warm flirtation; but Nancy knew that she could not catch him for a husband,—he was too much of a man of the world for that, and she took care that he should not catch her. Yet she was politic enough to parade his attentions whenever he came in the way, and might be seen at the market-inn window, or occasionally on the road from church, laughing and chatting with him in a fashion that stirred the very gall of her humbler wooers. The gay young gentleman farmer, the rich miller, the smart grazier, the popular lawyer of the county town, were all ready to fight for her; nay, the old steward, who was nearly as rich as the squire himself, and was old enough to be her father, offered to make a settlement upon her, that filled her father with delight. “Take him, Nance lass, take him,” he cried, “thy beauty *has* made thy fortune, that it has. Never a woman of our family were ever worth a hundredth part o’ that money.”

But Miss Nancy had a younger and handsomer husband in view; and Miss Nancy is Miss Nancy no longer: she has married the colonel of a marching regiment, and is at this moment the most dashing and admired lady of a great military circle, and the garrison town of ———.

RETROSPECTIONS
OF THE
LIFE OF SECUNDUS PARNELL.

He belonged to those upright men who are indispensable to the bad ; the deceiver calculates on their honesty.

SCHILLER

DID you ever fill, for an early friend, the office of executor ? If not, you have not yet learned all the vanity of life. It was, some time ago, my lot to perform this most melancholy duty. I had been actively engaged during the day in discharging the many claims it had brought upon me ; and, late at night, when every other soul of my family was sunk in sleep, and the silence was solemn and undisturbed, I sate down to examine a multiplicity

of papers. My friend had, in the long, lingering hours of his decline, evidently employed himself in making every arrangement of his manuscripts that could facilitate the distribution he desired. I found every thing assorted, tied up, and labelled ; and accompanied by catalogues and directions which led me, as by a clue, through what would have been otherwise an interminable chaos. The sight of his well-known hand-writing—a hand-writing that I had been accustomed to behold in the joyful, hopeful days of youth, in letters full of gaiety, affection, and intellectual aspiration, here laid before me, when that glorious but delusive season was gone by—when the hand itself that traced these lines was in the grave—when the spirit which had dictated them, had passed to its mysterious abode,—covered me with a nameless awe, and subdued me into the deepest mood of sorrow and of love. The many thoughts which I here found and recognised as having witnessed their warm up-welling in some hour of happy zeal and animation ; the many others which bore impressed upon them the clear character of his mind, but were to me perfectly new ; the various speculations of his days of health, and sanguine pursuit of human objects ; the more melancholy cogitations of his disappointments and declining days ; the last feeble tracings of a trembling hand,—of a

trembling heart,—of an eye that, turned by the warnings of a dissolving nature from earth, looked steadily, but awfully, into the depths of an unknown existence;—these wrapped me in a sympathy, and touched me with feelings, that I never knew before.

But what arrested my attention perhaps the most, was his extensive correspondence. The great mass of the letters of his friends was arranged in the nicest chronological order, tied up, and labelled; and a paper of instructions pointed out my duty. Some were sealed up, and addressed to the writers, still living; or to their children, with strict injunctions for their being sent to them unopened; others were to remain in sacred confidence in my hands, till the survival of those whom they might concern was ascertained; but there was another quantity which my friend requested I would, at least partially, peruse, and then destroy.

When I opened these, what a new world was unveiled to me! Though I had been acquainted with my friend in my youth, it was not in *his* youth,—if that man can be said to be old whose heart never quits youthful tastes, and the enthusiasm of its youthful affections. But his years were far more than mine; his head had already grown grey; and the friends of his early life had nearly all descended to the tomb before him.

These were their letters. They were the living thoughts of a race departed—to me utterly unknown: and when I made myself acquainted with their many natural notions; their playful humour and buoyant fancies; their frank, cordial, and overflowing love; their many unfoldings of glad hopes; of unlooked-for troubles; their tidings of deaths and marriages, and joyful returns from foreign regions; and their allusions to family occurrences, and personal touches of good fortune—all now buried with them; and called to mind that all these personages who thus lived, and loved, and poured their thoughts around them, were again as though they had never been; that earth could not produce them from her many millions; that they had scarcely a memorial, excepting in these pages preserved by their friend, and now about to be destroyed for ever;—the sense of the mystery of life came strongly upon me, and I could not help exclaiming—“What are we?” But if my heart was ever knit into sympathy with humanity, it was then. I saw how superficially we look upon our fellow-men. They pass us daily in the walks of life as so many automata; we know no more of them; yet, around us in a thousand and a thousand streams, their spirits are flowing in thoughts and passions and affections, in their own hidden circles of friendship—in their own hallowed retire-

ments of domestic love; and we go through the world blaming its coldness, and cursing its cruelties and its crimes, but all unconscious of the vast wealth of joy, and intellect, and affectionate attachment which hem us in on all sides, and overflow continually into the eternal sea. Well! thanks to an all-gracious God who has caused them to flow!

It was when I was thoroughly imbued with this spirit that I came upon a small manuscript volume, which I found to contain some retrospections of my friend's own life; and so much did they interest and affect me, that I shall venture to lay them before the reader without curtailment.

To comprehend them fully it is only necessary to know that he was a man with a fine taste; an inextinguishable love of nature, strengthened by having passed his youth in one of the most beautiful districts of England; of great simplicity of character; of a most conscientious spirit; a man, in short, such as Schiller has described in the words of my epigraph—"he belonged to those upright men who are indispensable to the bad: the deceiver calculates on their honesty."

When to this disposition we add, that he had an honourable desire of leaving a fair inheritance to his children, we see at once the whole source of

his troubles ; we see that it was impossible for him to escape them.

1760.—It is time that I determine on a plan of life. I am two-and-twenty years of age. In this my native place I spent many years of infantine and boyish delight, and made mental associations which give to this spot greater charms than to any portion of earth beside. But then, those years were spent in the bosom of parental love, in the sunny circle of a happy and soul-united family. I rambled the fields and forests with my father and brother ; with my brother and playfellows I sported in the green lanes, and fished, and bird-nested, and ran, with a keen relish, through all the sports and pursuits of boyhood. Those times are past. My parents are dead ; my brother is removed by his profession far from these scenes ; and with my small patrimony, I must now set seriously to work. It is the maxim of a great writer, that to be happy, and even honest, it is necessary to be independent. He is right—let me seek independence. My father, worthy man, has left me a pleasant cottage here ; a home after my heart's desire, and in a beautiful country ; he has put into my hands a good profession ; he has left me the heritage of a good name, amongst all the

best families of the neighbourhood—methinks there is a fair and honourable field of action. It is true my tastes are changed. I do not find so much delight in the society of this place, as I might in that of the city in which I have for some years dwelt; but then—are there not beautiful fields, and wild glens, and the old, old forests, and ever-flowing, ever-sounding streams? With the soul of Nature breathing around me, can I be solitary? And have I not two friends after my own heart? Two! That is more than many a gifted soul has found in a long, long life. Yes, my dear young companions, Mundy and Broughton, I am full of thankfulness when I think of you. Oh! many a time, in the hot, close city have I thought of our Sabbath rambles in the forest, as of days of heaven. Can I forget the time that we sate together beneath the spreading boughs of the wood; while before us all was a scene of sunshine and summer beauty,—the bees humming, the larks caroling in the air, other small birds flitting to and fro amid the heath, and along the high shaggy banks of the forest, as the wind waved the long grass and fern, and the fresh odours of the unploughed turf, and of a thousand flowers, came coolly towards us? Here we sate, and read with intoxication, and not without a degree of emulation, the works of a young poet which appeared

like a garland to adorn his tomb. How have I thought with rapture on our long walks, when the heath was all one crimson glow of bloom, and the fair forest streams ran clear as crystal in the sun, with a freshness and a voice that belongs only to water, living water! How we strolled along in gladness! how we talked and speculated on a thousand topics!

And now those days are once more mine. I have again trod with you those pleasant scenes. They are glad as ever; and you, as full of buoyancy of heart, are yet more strong and intelligent in spirit. Yes! I must sit down here to the business of life;—and methinks our existence here will be a simple, a spiritual, and not a useless dream of enjoyment.

1768.—It was on a sweet day in April that I thus reflected and resolved, as I sate in the old forest of Arden. The wild cherry shone here and there all glowing white in its profusion of blossom, though the green leaves had yet but half unfolded on the hedges and wood-boughs; the flying showers, so common at that season, gave to the earth a vivid freshness, and seemed to impart to the air a balmy elasticity; the cuckoo had just arrived, with its wild, dreamy note, full of the memories of our youth; and the odour of violets and primroses breathed upon me, as I passed; un-

locking the heart to those tender impressions and recollections which Spring awakens in us. Yes ! I said, in these scenes will I live !

How little do we know what is before us ! That very day, when I returned home, I found a letter from my brother,—my only brother, who had like myself been educated in the principles of the Society of Friends, of which our ancestors had been members from the time of its origin ; but, while he retained a firm attachment to its great leading doctrines, he abandoned its singularities of language and dress as unworthy of thinking men ; as well as some of its customs, deeming them but as the offspring of times of fanaticism and strong excitement ; or of those times in which the original enthusiasm subsiding, there had been, as is always the case, a clinging to forms and traditions rather than to the fervour of first love. He had stepped at once out of the narrow circle of his educational prejudices, and embraced the profession of the law. In this he soon acquired considerable eminence, practised in the Midland circuit, and pleaded in the chief town of his own county with great *éclat* : and now he informed me, to my sorrow and surprise, that he was appointed an Indian judge ; was about to embark ; and begged me to accompany him. He represented how much it would reconcile him to his lot could

he have my company ; with what delight he should entertain the prospect. He bade me reflect that to me, a person bound by no particular ties to England, and possessed of a strong love of observation, and of a poetical feeling, how advantageous it would be, in the very opening of life, to see so much of the world as this scheme promised ; and added that, in point of interest, there could be nothing in my prospects for a moment to be compared with it. It was in his power to secure me a speedy opulence, without the anxiety, labour, and slow accumulation that awaited me in England.

At the first view of so sudden and so mighty a step, I was startled and filled with fear ; but, as I revolved it in my mind, fraternal affection and the natural ardour of youth became the determining impulses ; and in less than a fortnight, I, who had deemed my lot one of quiet country life in England, was rolling on the waters of the great ocean, amid the novel scenes of an East-Indiaman and the sublime solitude of the sea. The new and noble scenery—the shores of Africa—the Cape—the wonders of the Indian Ocean—the magnificent cities—the wide plains—the glowing climate—the palms—the pagodas of Indostan, and the infinite varieties of people and customs which I witnessed in this voyage, would be full of delightful interest in my memory, had there not come behind them a

cloud of darkness that no future sunshine could dispel. My constitution would not bear that fiery climate. I was compelled to leave my brother, and return. To this hour my soul is full of anguish at our parting. I see him now, as I saw him when he had accompanied me to the ship which was to bring me to England; when the anchor was weighed, the farewell cheer was given, and I saw him sitting at the stern of the boat which carried him back to the shore;—sitting with his face reverted and fixed on the vessel all the way; saw him, when the boat arrived, step ashore, and walk aside till the other people had disappeared; then sit down on a stone, and there remain the solitary living object, till he lessened, and lessened, grew indistinct, and was lost to me—for ever! For ever! yes, for ever! Scarcely had I set foot in England, when another vessel brought me from my beloved Edward—his chest—his books!—all his effects!—his will!—made in the brief hour of a rapid disease. He was dead! and before me, thunderstruck and shaken to the very centre of my being by this unlooked-for event, were his last few written words, and the sum of his already acquired wealth!

I had no heart to look on these melancholy relics of the last of my kindred,—far less heart to use that money. But solitary thought soon be-

came intolerable to me ;—I sought for action, to escape from myself. I had formed an acquaintance with a gentleman who returned from India in the same vessel with me, and who, fond of mercantile speculations, had pressed me to join him in a trade to South America, which he represented as both pleasant and highly profitable. I now embraced his scheme, and performed in our own vessel several voyages to Para, whence we imported India-rubber, capivi and other drugs. Our affairs were prosperous ; and my partner, now leaving to me the care of the counting-house, went out himself. It was about the time of the expected return of our vessel : for a week it had been my daily business to look out on the quay, and to consult the telegraph. As I returned one day from this employ, and was about to enter my office, I beheld a plank from the prow of a vessel reared up by the door, on which the name of our own ship, and the private mark which had been made by my own hands, were visible. This had been picked up at sea : ship—captain—crew—all had perished !

In eight years have all these transactions taken place ; and once more friendless, for my two early friends died during my absence on the Indian voyage,—and penniless, except for the little heritage of my cottage, I have, at thirty, the work of life to begin.

1773.—This was a cheerless, a disheartening period; but I set firmly to work at my profession. Those who had called themselves my friends regarded me as an unsettled person. Around me were cold looks. By day I was a solitary traverser of fields; by night a solitary dweller in my little house. I expended little; I carefully accumulated my gains; and I soon found that if a happy life was not before me, I might still hope for an independent one. I went on steadily working; seeking no society; but adding to my capital. The prospect of better things arose. I made acquaintance with a worthy family: I felt a growing attachment for an estimable young woman; the zest of life returned into my heart, and the prospect of a cheerful and affectionate fire-side began to dawn upon me. But at this crisis I met one day, at the house of my betrothed, a man who claimed some degree of consanguinity with me, but who had long ceased to show me any kindness. On this occasion he assumed an air of rough frankness; seized my hand and shook it vigorously; and thus accosted me:—"Well, Secundus, I am glad to see things growing better with thee. Thou hast been a rolling stone to be sure, but it is a long lane that has no turn. Thou mayest do yet. I like to see thy diligence;—it makes amends for past remissness: and thy sober demeanour—it is a

good sign after much lightness ; and above all, I am glad to see thee here. A good wife is a good security against relapsing into vain courses. I know, Secundus, thou art poor ; and if a loan of a hundred, or so, will help thee,—furnishing is expensive, Secundus,—if, I say, it would do away any little difficulty—why, come to me.”

Heaven ! was it down to me as a crime, that this rude oration, in the presence of my intended wife and her parents, should have acted as a blasting and instantaneous mildew ? That I should have felt myself degraded ; and should not have had the courage to tell the ostentatious meddler, that I wanted not his aid ? But, be it as it may, I did not ! I could not ! I felt my soul seized as with a frost within me. I was uneasy, and saw that Lucy was uneasy ; that her parents were uneasy too. The officious counsellor went carelessly away, and left us in torturing silence. I would have flung off the sense of sudden evil that had seized me, but it clung to me as an iron band. I made a painfully fruitless effort, and withdrew.

If I wronged that young spirit, which I know was pure as the mountain snow, God forgive me ! Thou knowest that I sought to renew our intercourse. I met her alone, and she burst into tears. I would have poured out my soul to her as afore-

time—but I knew not how,—there was a chill, a benumbing spell upon me.—I could not break it; and Lucy again giving vent to an agony of tears, said, “Secundus, it is all over!—Henceforth our paths lie far apart.”

Had the fears of my instability shaken the faith of the gentle creature? Had the more calculating fears of her parents imposed upon her their commands? Had the viperous words of that frank and boisterous counsellor acted alike upon us all, snapping the fine band of our confidence, not yet grown strong enough by time and mutual knowledge? I know not; but from that day our acquaintance died away. The father of Lucy, and myself, passed each other with a cold nod; and Lucy, seized with that disease whose name tells of its character, but not of its cause, was soon a quiet tenant of our little burial-ground.

1780.—The wound given to my spirit by the breaking-up of my affectionate hopes, and by the death of Lucy, made me a sadder, a more solitary man: but the wound given to my pride by the malicious candour of that friendlike-looking enemy, made me suppress all softer feelings; and with tenfold ardour and perseverance follow on the track of accumulation. Business flowed in upon me; but for a long time I employed only one little boy to carry my chain; and through the long

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days of summer,—ay, from three and four o'clock in the morning, to ten and eleven at night, I was traversing the fields and hills; and through the winter I was equally sedulous on my plans. The lamp in my little office was rarely extinguished. Late at night it was burning. I snatched a hasty meal as I sate beside my desk, and pursued my labour still after midnight.

Many and many a time did I lie down in my clothes; and again, though not without an aching head, and a throbbing heart, a confused and sadly reluctant frame, did I rouse myself in the dismal and freezing winter mornings. I often arose after scarcely more than an hour's sleep, and long before even the cock crew, ere the parish apprentice was urged from her slumbers by her mistress, or the blacksmith, the earliest riser of the place, had set his forge a-roaring, and hammers clinking on the anvil. But this could not last:—my health failed,—terrible visions and feelings began to haunt me: I even dreaded madness; and, though with less terror, death. I got assistance, and still went on accumulating money. My wishes were crowned. I was comparatively rich. My neighbours again smiled upon me; my society was courted; and the rude counsellor would have given me his coarse hand, and his advice: but I turned doggedly away from him—relative as he was. I had not Chris-

tianity enough to forget the past ; I could not, though my own soul must have been the forfeit, have then forgiven him.

At this crisis I was sent by a nobleman to survey an estate in Wales. An opportunity of engaging in a mining concern, which appeared highly promising, here offered itself. I entered it, and settled down amongst the hills by the sea-side, in my new pursuit. The tide of good fortune seemed flowing in a strong current. I was offered a share in extensive iron-works. I embraced it, and found myself on the high-road to opulence. The first year, I netted a clear thousand pounds ; and, as the concern could employ all the capital I had to invest, there was a prospect of an almost unlimited growth of my fortune. To crown my prosperity, I now found and secured the affections of a woman who realized all the praises of Solomon,—her price being far above rubies. Three years of such happiness as earth has rarely to give, were mine. My income was abundant ; my prospects brilliant ; my house enlivened by the wife of my heart, and by two lovely children. I walked from day to day in joy and thankfulness ; and, I trust in God, without forgetfulness of others ; not in pride, though in gladness of heart.

Yet my felicity is not at this moment without a little cloud. My partner's brother, who is engaged

in other iron-works, would fain prevail upon me to exchange concerns with him, to allow him to join his brother. I would not willingly keep brother apart from brother, and his works are represented as even more prosperous than ours; but I have a fear, an inward warning, that I would not slight; a voice that cries "thou art well!—hazard not change; tempt not fortune too far."

My partner has himself mentioned the scheme to me within these few days; he and his brother have become pressing: but I am resolved; they might as well ask me to cut off my right hand!

1797.—God, how weak are all thy creatures! how incalculably weak in the hour of prosperity! Within a week after I had made the vow recorded above, I had given way to the importunities of my partner and his brother; I had made the exchange, and found myself a fool and a ruined man! The works of the brother were on the verge of bankruptcy,—this had occasioned his importunity. No sooner did I get into possession of the concern, than I discovered that all was lost; and had but just time to extricate myself from the firm and save my good name. But who may tell, who may comprehend my feelings? My good opinion of men was shaken to atoms. From the first day of my connexion with my partner to that of leaving him, I had seen nothing in him but open honour, and

scrupulous honesty ; yet he could thus deceive and ruin me ! I had lost my all. My capital, so hardly scraped together by labour, anxiety, and waste of health and comfort, was all gone. I had even mortgaged my little patrimony to the full for this golden scheme. My family was at once plunged from the summit of prosperity and happiness, into beggary. It was not the least of mercies, that I had been educated in principles of peace, of forbearance, and endurance ; that I had been put under the power of a healthful conscience, and did not, therefore, take bloody vengeance on the author of my ruin !

But there was no enduring inaction. In the agony and bitterness of my feelings, I rose and set out for my mines in Wales. I set out on foot, on a journey of a hundred miles. My horses, my carriage, I had already disposed of, to meet just demands. I would not expend an unnecessary sixpence. I went on my way in the most absolute wretchedness that can afflict a mortal ; now blaming my own folly, now execrating the villany of my deceivers. On the third day, at evening, I reached the little mountain village, near which my mines lay. Wearied, and sick at heart, and full of the most gloomy prospects of my future life, I went to bed in the wretched inn, or rather cottage, in which I took up my sojourn. At midnight I

was awakened by the most terrible confusion of sounds: a tempest had broken in upon the place, such as is imagined only to visit the tropics. Wind and thunder mingled in stunning uproar,—lightning that showed the darkness doubly deep,—darkness that swallowed up the lightning in a moment. The crazy dwelling rocked, and creaked, and trembled in the furious blast; the rain poured in torrents through the roof; and without, were such cries as thrilled through my soul. The village was situated in a desolate glen of the mountains that overlooked the sea; it was November in all its wildness. I opened a casement, and amid the raging fury of the winds that roared and rushed upon me with stifling vehemence, I could learn that the sea had broken into the glen, and swept away the lower dwellings. Its roaring was terrible; and the shouts of the people coming fitfully amid the tumult of wind and waters, seemed like the last cries of the drowning. I threw on my clothes, and hurried out; but the violence of the wind was such, that I could only stand by holding by a post, or tree, and could not, without difficulty, breathe. Nothing but the intense peril and distress of so many people, could have enabled me to persevere till I had reached the lower region of the glen; and there I could only witness a wide scene of woe, without much power to assist. The

poor creatures were some busy endeavouring to save themselves, their children, or their furniture, from the fury of the waves; while others were wringing their hands, or were seated on the strand in a stupor of despair. Many of the women were running to and fro, with streaming hair, and eyes fixed wildly on the fishing-boats, that in the dark and raging ocean were dashed hither and thither, and, ever and anon, were flung on the beach with their drowned masters. Heaven and earth seemed, to my gloomy and desponding soul, to be coming to an end. I helped my wretched fellows as I could; and, as the morning dawned drearily, returned, wet and spiritless, to my poor inn. The woe that surrounded me was too much for me; I hastened away to the mines. Hither the infection of my ill-fortune seemed to have extended itself. I found that sixty pounds were the whole of my property in them—the whole that I had in the world! Yet out of this I could not depart without leaving something to still more unhappy beings. I placed in the hands of the curate, ten pounds for the sufferers, and went on my way.

I thought in my prosperity that I had no pride; but I found it now! I had to return to my native place, to my original profession; it was my only resource. I, who had, but four years before, left it with growing fortunes and splendid hopes, must

now return a ruined man, and with a wife and children to bear with me the contempt of poverty and misfortune.

I shall never forget that day. We delayed our approach so as to enter the place at night, and took up our abode in our little house. The next day was the Sabbath : we issued forth to meeting. We had seen and spoken to no one ; we had announced to no one our coming ; but as we went up the street we could see that the story of our disasters had come before us. The poor looked out of their windows with pity ; the rich with looks and even smiles of contempt. We sate down in our place of worship—that place where all should be as children in the presence of a father ; amongst a people who inculcate doctrines of meekness and benevolence, and have called themselves by a name of amity. Cold and curious looks were cast on us ; and when we arose, at the breaking-up of the meeting, colder hands received the grasp of ours ; nay, some even shrunk from them, as from the touch of a viper, and hurried away as from a pestilence. It was a cutting dispensation ; and I believe I should have sunk under it, had it not been for my noble-minded wife. She bore it with wonderful fortitude ; bade me think nothing of it ; that it was well to learn who were our friends, a lesson which only poverty could teach. She

strengthened me, and encouraged me to go on with my business in hope—but it was a dark time. Other people had taken up the profession I had laid down, and occupied my place ;—employment came slowly in.

I had two cousins in the town, who had, in my prosperity, shown me much good will. I called one day to request their interest in procuring me the survey of an estate of a friend of theirs. There I found my maliciously candid counsellor. I would have withdrawn, but he seized me by the coat, clapped the door behind me, and gave me an harangue to show me how he had predicted years before, the misfortune which had overtaken me. He stopped not here. He poured out an abundance of abuse on my wife, as a proud, extravagant, and fine-lady body, whom I had been weak enough to suffer to ruin me. I rose to seize him in my wrath, and hurl him from the house; but he exclaimed, with his usual candour, “Nay, nay, Secundus, don’t get into a rage, man. I only wished to tell thee my mind; and if I don’t please, I am going.” He drew the door after him, and was gone.

I turned to my cousins; they stood silent. “And do you believe these assertions? The justice of this abuse?”

“No!”

“Then why did you not interfere? Why not testify your disapprobation?”

“We thought thee very capable of defending thyself.”

“I trust I am,” I replied with warmth; “but is it thus you suffer a man to speak of a female in your house; of an innocent woman—of one of your own relatives, and are silent? I would not hear the meanest of her sex abused without expressing my abhorrence of the unmanly outrage. But your relative! my wife! and in your own house!”

I sprang out, and thanked God that I had been saved from the mortification of asking a favour at their sordid hands.

We had been accustomed to attend the monthly meetings of our people, which are sometimes held at the distance of ten miles from my native place, in our gig: but now, I did not allow myself the time from my profession; and my poor wife in her devotion went alone, on foot. It was through a wild country; on a hilly and fatiguing road; yet she went and returned in one day. Worthy woman! she had the spirit of a martyr;—for those whom she went to meet, with whom she sate at one common table on these occasions, and who had often sat smiling at mine, drove past the weary walker with cracking whips and smoking horses,

and deigned her not the occupance of a vacant seat in a carriage—nay, not even a look. God! make me humble and forgiving! for when I think of these things, my heart grows hard, and full of bitterness.

When I looked on my meritorious wife, uncomplaining in adversity; on my thoughtless little children, playing on the floor and in the cottage garden; and thought to what a state I had brought them, I was overpowered by my regrets; but my pride again strengthened me, and I followed my profession with ardour and penurious diligence of former days.

At this time came a crisis of the greatest interest. The neighbouring forest of Arden was about to be enclosed; whoever was chosen to survey it would secure a fortune; but alas! there were many powerful competitors ready to canvass for the appointment. I was poor, friendless, and with a character for instability, and for visionary schemes. I had therefore little apparent chance of success. I would have sate still in despair; but my wife bade me be bold, and put in my claim. I *might* succeed; I could not lose anything. With a prayer to God, in whose hands are the hearts of men, I wrote my application and sent it off. Oh, the weary time till the day of election came! All that day my wife and myself sate on the hearth

thinking and wishing, but hardly daring to hope. I could not set about my work ; I could not even bear to walk out into the garden ; so there we sate and sate till midnight, when we went to bed, but not to sleep, for we were full of anxious expectation of that decision which was already made, and which would be known in the morning.

As we lay thus, full of absorbing excitement, we heard a horse gallop up the street ; it stopped beneath our window ; we heard some one say, "What news?" for we ourselves lay as still and as helpless with the intensity of the moment's interest, as if we had been dead—"What news?" and the horseman replied, "Mr. Parnell is appointed surveyor of the enclosure!"

At that word we both started up, and with hearts that seemed to burst into one mighty gush of tears, poured out thanksgiving to our gracious God. I rose and flung the man a guinea, bidding him come in the morning for further testimony of my thanks.

Who may now conceive the state of my feelings—the felicity of my lot? A certain independence was before me. From this day a new life began. The clouds of care were rolled away : there was spring abroad—there was spring in my heart. I set about reconnoitring and planning in my mind the dissection of the forest. Some parts, the pro-

perty of the crown, were still to retain their woodland aspect, but to be opened with ridings; some were to be laid out in woods, and wildernesses, and pleasure-grounds surrounding villas; some to be cut through with roads leading amid extensive farms. As I laid out the various parts, my children accompanied me, playing amid the heath, and under the mighty and ancient oaks of the old woods; and making acquaintance with Nature's wonders, that would be sure to live in their hearts for ever, and tend, as the spirit of Nature ever does, to keep them simple, and healthful, and pure. They were wont too, to partake my meals in some cottage, where we received the assiduous attentions, and heard the little stories of their inhabitants. It was a blessed time! and left me finally beyond wishes for myself, and fears for my children.

When our children are young, and playing before us, how little are we impressed with the anticipation of the misery which their fortunes or conduct may bring upon us in after years! And yet, how many families are scattered asunder by the explosion of the passions that agitate manhood; leaving the parents who have brought them up in love, and in delicious hope, stunned, and even annihilated, on the spot; how few escape without one scathed member, which tinges its kindred lives with

everlasting gloom. It seemed to me a strange exclamation which I once heard a poor woman make to her husband, as they stood in a crowd to witness an execution :—" John ! John ! how thankful we ought to be, that we have reared thirteen children, and not one of them has been hanged !" Yet now that singular apostrophe seems less ludicrous than sorrowful. I have this moment returned from the funeral of my daughter,—God forgive me, if I say, my favourite daughter. She had grown up, however, not my favourite alone, but the favourite of the family. The flower of the flock,—to use a common phrase ; the lovely, the gay, the affectionate, and the witty ; her charms had drawn the love of a youth, not wealthy, but with all those qualities which seem to render the acquisition of wealth sure,—a handsome person, a bright and cordial temperament, a frank and yet insinuating address, and abilities that made him the honoured of all circles. For my part, I regarded him as one likely to bring to our house both good will and good fortune ; and, notwithstanding that my wife did not participate in my confidence, but rather had fears, and gave me warnings of the youth's instability, I did not so much sanction their marriage, as strenuously promote it. I even took the young man into partnership, and pleased myself with the prospect of

casting the burden of life from my shoulders on one so able and ready to bear it. What then was the shock and astonishment of my mind, to find that, when sent out on a journey of high trust, he had fled, with the full half of my property in his hands. To us all it was a thunder-stroke ; to his high-minded wife, all but death. For some time she violently repelled every suspicion, every charge against him,—but the truth soon came resistlessly, and she sank.

Many rumours came, from time to time, of his deeds and misdoings ; his wanderings, his revelings, his abiding with strange characters. At length, his wife rose up, as if inspired with a spirit of desperation, and determined to seek him out, and, if possible, to reclaim him. From so hopeless a project we strove in vain to dissuade her,—she departed. For two years of inexpressible sadness she was absent ; writing often, at first, in sorrow and in much love, but with little, and then less, and less hope—till we heard no more.

For six months there had been a total silence, and we feared that she was dead ; when a hasty letter, in her hand-writing, summoned me, in terms that fell like liquid fire upon my heart, to visit her in the gaol of our own county-town. I flew on the wings of paternal love ; and oh ! Father of men ! what a scene was it mine to witness ! There

I found my child,—my poor, worn-down, heart-wearied, and half-dying child, seated on the straw of the prison floor, resting on her lap the head of her wretched husband. Had it not been for her presence, and her words, he might have remained by me unrecognised. Sin, consuming riot, devouring passions, and more devouring remorse, had changed him from beauty to ugliness; from youth to sudden age; from strength to the last stage of mental feebleness. His shagged and lank hair,—his unshorn beard and large whiskers, already stricken with grey, half burying his thin, sunken, and ghastly features, and the haggard, yet dim glance of eyes in which terror and remorse were fearfully mingled, made my heart tremble within me.

I found, from the relation of my daughter, that for a long time he had laughed at her remonstrances; then grew enraged with her affectionate importunity; then horrified her with the wickedness of his language, and even treated her with a ferocity of cruelty in which he seemed to have a savage delight. But when his resources failed, when his companions in riot fell away, her unwearied love at length sunk him to silence—long a sullen silence—which eventually broke into tears, into tremblings, into bitter repentance. In this mood they had travelled towards home, hoping for

forgiveness, yet daring not to ask it at a distance, when one whom he had defrauded at the same time with myself, accidentally beheld him, and cast him into prison.

We hastened to remove him, but he died ; and my poor daughter, exhausted by the labours of a miserable, yet magnanimous love, lingered awhile, —lay passively amid the embraces and the tears of her own dear family, and then expired.

1810.—What wait I for ? The wheel of existence has run its round ; and has left me where it found me. On the very spot where I was born ; in the very cottage—almost my sole patrimony—I sit, poor as when I exclaimed, nearly sixty years ago—“It is time that I determined on a plan of life.” I am poor as then—for I have divided my property amongst my children—I am as solitary : but how different are my views,—how different are my feelings,—how different am I altogether ! On my head are the snows of age, and in my heart the profoundly tranquil feeling of a satisfied existence. Yes ! I have done my day’s work. The fire which urged me along, as a meteor is urged through the air, has spent itself ; and I live ;—but with a far different life to the young. Strength has forsaken my limbs ; and desire my bosom : my wife has long gone down to the dust ; my children are running the race of life as I once ran it, in distant places,

with all its cares and passions in their bosoms—with their children around their knees. For my part, I sit in the sun before my solitary house, and say, "What wait I for?" And yet, said I not that desire had forsaken me—that my spirit was profoundly tranquil? It is not so! A new thirst has seized me; I long to enter on the mysteries of a more mighty and invisible existence. I see the lark rise into the sky with a rapid wing, and a soul of triumphant music, and then sink again silently to the earth, and I exclaim, "Thou art like me! Fain would I soar up into the infinite universe, but this heavy body drags me down." I see the sun rise and set, and I cry, "Ah! thou art like me! Thou goest away only to reappear on the earth. Thou canst not travel in thy strength through the fields of thy kindred stars, nor can I follow my fellows into the spiritual regions." My heart is like a balloon, that once was bound to earth by many hands: my bands were friends, possessions, the affections of a wife; the endearments and prospective cares of children.—One by one, they have been loosened, a single cord detains me, and a tenfold impatience of departure has seized me. I tug at the restraining line with an angry impetuosity, and ask, "What wait I for?"

I see it! I feel it! It is to learn the last hard lesson. It is to gather the last great pearl of

human life. It is to win the last great victory—
victory over the desperate wilfulness of nature ;
to put on the meek strength of invincible patience,
that I may be borne into the last great life pure
and passive, as becomes a child of eternity !

THE
FORTUNES OF ALICE LAW.

Of all the melancholy abodes of the poor and unfortunate, the depths of our metropolis, the lanes and alleys, involved in other lanes and alleys with the intricacy of the most artful labyrinth, where they herd together in crowded and yet unsocial misery, seem to me the most fearfully hopeless. Around them moves the never-ceasing stir, the single-aimed activity, of commerce; around them stand the ten thousand magnificent homes of opulence, where the children of dissipation live amid every bright enchantment of artificial existence—

Minions of splendour, shrinking from distress;
and they, unknowing and unknown, struggle on,
removed from the observation of the powerful,

and, by their very multitude, from the sympathies of each other.

In this awful state of metropolitan society, the only hope of reaching the depths of poverty seems in the association of numbers; in dividing the mighty expanse into districts: and well is it that this has been done. Numbers of benevolent institutions have arisen, some taking under their care one kind of popular wretchedness, some another; and by such means the only light which falls into the darkness of these hidden regions of vice and woe is diffused. But still, what power shall grapple with an evil so enormous?—what scheme shall reach the need where thousands on thousands of strangers are for ever pouring into this swarming and almost boundless human hive, where the wicked secrete themselves in the very heap of moving life, and where the proud heart of the fallen seeks to hide from the searching eye of compassion?

These thoughts have been forced upon me by making some rounds with a friend—a member of a benevolent society—in the alley allotted for his visitation. The scenes and characters, the mingled loathsomeness of vulgarity, atrocity, and uncleanness, which I saw existing there, God wipe out from my memory! But the painful interest awakened by finding in this mass of vileness

and degradation instances of singular fortune and singular virtue may I never forget !

There is one story which I must relate. We entered a cellar beneath a dismal-looking shop. It was an abode of a single room ; and such a one as is generally the most disgusting and depressing scene imaginable : but here I was instantly struck with the difference. All was clean and bright. The weather, though in summer, was showery, and a fire was burning cheerfully in the grate. The bed, neat and clean, stood in one corner, enveloped in its large checked curtains ; every thing around had an air of comfort, which one would previously have said could not exist in such a spot. By the fire sate, in her elbow-chair, an old woman of a slight person, who rose actively at our entrance, and, with a manner that struck me in strange contrast with the sluggish stare of the generality of those we had visited, courtesied respectfully, and set us chairs. My friend took a seat without ceremony, requested me to do the same, and addressed the old woman in a manner which showed me that they were old and familiar acquaintances. I gazed upon her attentively, and was as much struck with the intelligence of her countenance, as I had been with the superiority of her address. The wrinkles of age, and, if I mistook not, the ravages of misfortune, darkened

and disfigured a face which must once have had considerable pretensions to beauty; but that air which is given by a cultivated mind alone lit up those wan and worn features, and filled me with wonder.

“Well, Alice,” said my friend, “and what is Arthur doing?”

“Oh! sir! he is about his old employ; looking out at the docks amongst the American captains for news of the judge; but a weary life it is; we hear nothing yet.”

“You have promised me, Mrs. Law, to let me hear your history, and, if you have no objection, let it be now; this is a friend of mine who will take as strong an interest in it as myself.”

The old lady, for so I must call her, had by this time resumed her chair; as my friend spoke she gave an upward motion of her hand, and a simultaneous slight shake of her head, expressive of the painfulness of the task; but, without any pause, she replied:

“Mr. Hemming, you ask a melancholy thing for me, and, I fear, for yourself; but, dear sir, what is so precious to people as their own misfortunes! and what so flattering as to be asked to relate them by one like you, who have shown so much kindness to two poor old creatures that nobody else cares for! From the very day you

entered this house there was something in your tone that gave me comfort; and when you familiarly called my husband by his own name, Arthur, I know not how it was, and I hope you will excuse me, but I could not help looking upon you as a friend and almost as a relative. Oh, sir! what years and years have rolled over us, while every one has called my husband Mr. Law, and nobody has shown him more kindness than he would to the strange dog that lies in the street! But, sir, the bitterness which neglected poverty creates in us you have half done away with; we will let these things pass, and I will tell my story.

“My earliest recollection of life is of living with my father and mother, a younger sister, and two brothers, in a beautiful place in the country. Oh, how sweetly beautiful does that place seem! We were all young: myself the eldest, perhaps not more than ten years of age; the rest each a year younger than the other. My father was the son and heir of the ancient family of St. Barbe. The house we lived in was, in reality, the parsonage; the living to which it belonged being held nominally by the clergyman of the next parish till my youngest brother, Henry, should be old enough to take it. It was a small but delightful residence; and over the great woods we

could see the towers of the old castle of Dunwold, where my grandfather resided, and where we were told we should some day go to live. My father, as I remember him, was a tall and handsome man; the family of the St. Barbes was always said to be distinguished for its noble-looking men and its beautiful women; and, in truth, my father's sisters, of whom there were four, seem to my recollection to have been amongst the loveliest females I ever beheld.

“My father led the life of a country gentleman who had great expectations. He was fond of field sports, and, with other young gentlemen of his acquaintance, was zealously engaged with anglers and gamekeepers, and catchers of otters, and polecats, and such wild creatures, for the greater part of the summer days, and often took us into the fields and woods with him on our little ponies. In autumn and winter he shot and hunted, and came home with stories of exploits that made our dinner-hour full of a strong country interest. The intellectual character of my mother redeemed him from the utter devotion to such pursuits, which absorb too many of his class. In the evening, as he reposed his weary limbs on the sofa, my mother read many new books to him; and often they, and their friends who came in, talked of what they read with a vivacity and

enthusiasm which, though we could not comprehend the scope of their conversation, made us feel that they were very wise and very happy. My mother was a lovely, gentle woman, of a thoughtful and most domestic disposition. She was an orphan heiress: the death of her father, a general officer, in battle, and the consequent rapid decline of her mother's health, had made a sad impression upon her, which induced her to seek her enjoyments in the still delights of home, and caused her to shrink from the gaieties and bustle of town life.

"Our house, I have said, was not large. It was situated in the midst of shrubberies, and, in front, a green lawn sloped away to a brook, which ran on, clear as crystal, amidst overhanging grass and flowers and drooping trees, always beautiful, and abounding with endless objects of curious wonder to us. Adjoining the garden was a paddock, surrounded with an old stone wall, in places overgrown with ivy, where various birds built their nests. Here our ponies grazed, and here we continually played, at once safe and happy. Oh! that delightful old paddock, with its thorn trees, and its shed, where the ponies lay in the heat of summer noons, and where the swallows built under the rafters! We had a governess, who was our perpetual companion,

our playfellow, and the inventor of a thousand pleasures; and in this simple, happy state our time rolled on. Our life was a strong contrast to that of the castle. There all was splendour, bustle, and gaiety, for one part of the year; in the rest all was solitude. My father went thither occasionally, but always came back sad and fretful. My father's sisters were rarely amongst our visitors. They were beautiful; but we did not love them, for they seemed to us proud and cold. We were often told by the servants that we should some day remove to the castle; and we always asked—'Shall we be like our aunts?—Will there be such numbers of carriages and people all about then?—and shall we sit up at night, and have the whole castle turned into a fairy-land, with lamps, and bowers, and garlands, and gay people feasting and dancing till daylight?' We once asked these questions of my father; and we were frightened to see how he looked, and to hear the tone in which he said—'God forbid!'

"But the time came: our grandfather died; the castle stood in a manner deserted. The hatchment was seen by us, as we rode at a distance through the park, fixed to the front of the house above the great hall door. We were now told that we should soon go to live there. But we observed that our father had lost his usual cheer-

fulness; he was grown gloomy and passionate; and one day, when we innocently asked—‘Shall we go to live at the castle?’ he answered fiercely—‘Never!’

“These things were then mysteries to us; but I know them all now. My grandfather was a proud but inconsiderate old man. He had a seat in parliament, and, living much in London, he was seized with the desire of emulating the style of those who had tenfold his income. With a rental of six thousand a year, he lived at the rate of sixteen thousand. He married three times, and obtained with each wife some fortune, but also an extension of expensive connexions that only hurried him deeper into debt. By these means my father found the estate, when it fell to him, utterly lost. He had all the pride of the St. Barbes; and you may easily imagine what were his feelings on discovering that the ancestral estate was irremedially forfeited. His pride had influenced him so far, on the marriage of his sisters, as to induce him to unite in cutting off the entail, in order to raise their fortunes on the property—fortunes, too high in justice to himself. Bitterly did he now regret it; not that he would have defrauded any one of sixpence, but, had the entail existed, it would have enabled him to hold the estate till, by unwearied exertions and parsi-

mony, he had paid off the debt. The rapacity of creditors made this impossible. It was determined that the estate, which had been in the family for ten descents, should be brought to the hammer, and his spirit would not let him remain in the country to witness the sale.

“ Oh ! never shall I forget this beginning of all our sorrows ! never shall I forget the moody and strange man he was now become ! Our doors were closed against all comers ; the longest acquaintances, the nearest friends, not one was admitted, to counsel or condole. He could not bear their presence. Never shall I forget how gloomily he paced the house ; how gloomily he lay for whole days on the couch, in the room where we had been accustomed to sit with open windows, a happy family, breathing all the fragrance of the garden :—it was now darkened with nearly-closed shutters. Never shall I forget the groans which burst at times, as if unconsciously, from him ; the loud and angry words—oh ! I trust they were not curses—with which he mingled his own and his father’s name. Never, never, can I forget how I saw him snatch up my brother Vincent, and press him to his bosom with a convulsive energy that threatened to stifle him ; and then, how he set him down, and gazed at him with a long strange look, and said solemnly — ‘ Young St.

Barbe ! my pride and my folly have ruined thee ! I have driven thee from thine own domain. A St. Barbe, and—a beggar !' and then how he stooped down, and swayed to and fro, and burst into an hysterical passion of grief, that terrified us nearly to death. Oh ! that was a dreadful time ! The quiet conversations between him and my mother were now changed into silence—a silence broken, ever and anon, by a quick, vehement dialogue, that might have seemed to a spectator who did not hear the words as passages of high quarrel. But it was not so.

“ My mother, who felt not less the force of this misfortune, had, however, far more temperate views. She attempted, by all possible means, to sooth my father's desperation of mind ; and when she saw it give way in some degree, she would say—‘ Dear Charles ! what is the real amount of our troubles ?—Have we not all that we have had for these last ten happy, happy, years ?—Have we not this sweet home ? —Have we not our children ?—have we not our friends ?—and wealth enough to live as we have done ?—and what need we more ? I could, indeed, have beheld with pride our children in the abode of their ancestors ; I could have seen them with pride take their distinguished station amongst their affluent neighbours : but never could I have been happier than

I have been with you in this house from the hour of our marriage. Let us not forget God's goodness in our disappointment: all will then go well, believe me, Charles. These dear ones will not be penniless: they will have their mother's little wealth; and in this noble country the road is open, with God's blessing, to even higher honours and usefulness than our ancestors have ever attained.'

"Such was the language she repeatedly employed. But his heart was wounded beyond healing; a dark and desperate design had now seized his brain. He would not remain in England to meet contempt from the eyes which had once honoured him, he said; there was a wide continent open to receive him. He would pass over to America, and his children should begin a new career. What here was but a pittance would there purchase the breadth of a kingdom. He would be a patriarch amid the woods and plains of the New World; his children should strive to place themselves amongst a new and noble race of statesmen and legislators.

"At the avowal of this scheme, my mother shrank with terror. Her heart and soul were knit to her native land. Her manners, her tastes, her friendships, were all formed to its life and its enjoyments. She could bear the thought of lying

down on the block for her husband's or children's sake; but she could not bear the idea of living in exile from all that she had ever regarded as the very breath and vitality of human existence. To leave this great and illustrious country, which their ancestors had lived and died to raise to the pinnacle of mortal glory—this country, to which all nations looked as the marvel of the earth—this country, in which Religion had assumed her shape of maturest beauty, and where Literature had breathed over its paradisaical fields and ancient woods the spirit of intellectual enchantment, and touched the purified affections as with the glow of heaven!—to leave this country!—it was to her in prospect a dreary and lingering death.

“Oh, sir! I must not pause here. There was a long time of deep and uncomfortable, though affectionate, contention; and it ended as such contests usually end between the wilful strength of man and the reluctant weakness of woman—my mother yielded to the project of emigration;—and we prepared to depart. We had all our family pictures packed up, our family plate, and many a testimony of the antiquity of our line, in the shape of furniture or jewels. We took with us our old steward, our governess, dear Miss Raidon, and many of our servants: for we were to build a house exactly like our Dunwold castle; to lay

out park and woods like those about it; and to live in the midst of our kingdom of an estate in a sort of happy persuasion that we had carried our old domain across the waters.

“Alas! alas!—But let us go on. We were now on the seas. The effort had been made by both my parents: the one had seen the land to which he was bound by pride, the other by affection, recede from sight; and the natural agony of the time was over. They were neither of them happy, but they were more resigned. My father had an air of something like cheerfulness, like exultation. He would talk rapidly and often. He expatiated on the rising greatness of the country to which we were going; on the beauty of new institutions, raised on the wisdom and experience of a world; he dwelt on the fascinations of a new life, in new scenes, where we had enough to make us rich as princes, and more free and more happy than princes could possibly be: and when he saw that all this failed to raise an equal glow in my mother’s bosom, or rather, failed to deceive her, because he did not deceive himself, he turned to that last poor consolation of unsatisfied experiments—and exclaimed—‘And let what will come, we go not as thousands go; we have the means, any day, if we like not the people or the country, to return.’

“We had been at sea a week : the wind was favourable, the weather beautiful ; and our young minds were full of amazement at the novelty of the objects around us. Another fortnight, and we should probably see America ! At this crisis a vessel appeared to windward ; as she drew near, we observed that she occasioned amongst us a marked alarm. It was just at the time when, after the American war, our fleets had so far restored the credit of our arms by their victories, that our vessel, a merchantman, had ventured on her voyage without convoy or companion. The vessel drew nearer, and fulfilled the worst apprehensions of the captain—it was a French sloop of war. The terror of that moment is not to be described. All was bustle and confusion, for it was determined to offer resistance, our vessel carrying guns. The women and children were hurried below ; and, in an agony of suspense, we listened and conjectured, as we heard the running and the stir above our heads. I remember the terrible burst of thunder from the cannon, which made our vessel stagger and reel with the shock ; the shouts and screams, and the darkness of enveloping smoke. I remember the rush and the gloom, as of sudden midnight, when the hostile vessel came close alongside of us, and there was a cry amongst us that we were taken ; and a

sudden paroxysm of desperate anxiety to know the truth, overcoming all other terror, seized on the women, and, with a fearful shriek, they tore open the cabin-door, rushed up the steps, now unguarded, followed by the children clamouring after them. I have a confused jumble of awful recollections, of streaming blood, of mangled bodies, some dead, some rolling in terrible agony; of strange men crowding on board our vessel, and our captain and crew delivering up their arms: but all these circumstances, dreadful as they are, are faint in my memory from the far more dreadful events which followed.

“ Our captain speedily explained to the enemy that, though ours was an English vessel, she was freighted by Americans, a fact which several American merchants on board soon verified; and the French commander, with much politeness disclaiming any intention of injuring their good allies, the citizens of the United States, called his men to order, and prepared to take his leave of us. As he was bowing and smiling amid all the blood and death which surrounded him, as if no such things were present, he suddenly cast his eye on my youngest sister, who stood holding the gown of her mother, and exclaimed—‘ What a little angel! This is English, and this, Monsieur le Capitaine, is mine by right of conquest.

She is my prize of war : she shall be my daughter —my trophy ; and, when I see her, I will remember this day.' At the same moment one of his men snatched her up ; in the next, she was handed, struggling and screaming, over the heads of his comrades, and was lowered into the boat. My mother sprung forward with a terrible shriek, and, clasping the captain's knees, implored him with all a mother's wildness to give her back her child. My father, with the fury of a tiger, rushed upon him, and aimed a blow at his head, which, had not a dozen swords of his followers interposed, would have laid him prostrate on the deck. With the utmost coolness, with a bow and another smile, the captain at once commanded the men not to return my father's blow, and, seizing my brother Henry, who, filled with an indignation equal to his father's, had advanced with a burning and frowning face, and struck the captain on the knee, 'Ah,' he exclaimed, 'a little hero ! and you, too, shall be mine.' The little fellow was instantly caught up, and handed over the side of the vessel, when an exclamation of horror burst from the captors : in his determined resistance he had slipped through their hands, and was lost for ever in the waves ! It is not for me to describe what followed. My father was only restrained by the efforts of our whole crew

from rushing on the robbers, and, when that was hopeless, from destroying himself. My mother was lost in a succession of swoons, and in that condition was borne below.

“Our vessel pursued her way. During the remainder of the voyage we saw not our parents; we were told that they were very, very ill. But oh! the laughter, the wild, terrible laughter, which burst at times from my mother’s cabin! My father’s voice we never heard, and we imagined that he was dead. Oh! that long, awful voyage of misery! For six weeks we were driven about by contrary winds, and all that time we saw not our parents, but were still told they were very ill. At length we reached land; and, the night before we disembarked, we were told that our parents were better, and we must go and see them; but we were warned to be as quiet as possible. We went in, and were speedily clasped in the arms of our father with most passionate but speechless caresses. Oh! terrible, terrible, was that interview! Our parents were both strangely altered. My father seemed shrunk into an old man. He had a yellow and withered aspect, and sate embracing us and weeping. But our mother—O! what a change was there in her! She was become thin, and her fingers were grown bony: her hair was turned grey; and there was a wild-

ness in her eyes that made us tremble, and chilled us to the heart. She, who would fain have remained in her own beloved land—she, who lived in her children—thus to have been torn from the one, and thus to have lost two of the other!—it was too much!—her mind was gone for ever!

“We landed next morning on this shore of promise: alas! what a land it was to us! Our old steward and Miss Raidon took the management of everything. They procured a carriage, and conveyed us to lodgings in the city. My father sate silent and sunk in the depths of his affliction; my mother continually inquired if we had not reached heaven, and why her other two children did not come to meet us.

“Gentlemen, I must pass over eight melancholy years. We advanced into the country: we bought a large and beautiful estate; we had a house built, and the old paintings and other relics of our English home disposed about us. All this the old steward and Miss Raidon did, because it was what my father had said should be done; but he took no interest in it; and as for my mother, she gradually faded and declined, like a plant at whose root is the canker-worm; and we buried her under the great locust-tree in front of the house.

“After her death a gleam of light—motive to

action — seemed to break in upon the mental darkness of my father. As he looked on us, his remaining children, now growing to manhood and womanhood, he seized on the idea that such as I was his daughter had become in France. From that hour he had an object which never lost its interest. He made it his business to seek out French emigrants; to learn from what part of France they came; and, after telling them again and again of his misfortune, to weary them with questions about his daughter. So frail, in fact, so utterly next to nothing, was the clue of his inquiry, that he obtained vague conjectures, false stories, but no real intelligence. Such was the object of his life for several years: ours, under the guidance of Miss Raidon and a tutor whom she found for my brother, was to gain the best education we could, and to endeavour to make him forget by our attentions the dear ones whom he had lost.

“One evening in autumn, a stranger traveller requested admittance for the night. It was readily granted him; and well do I recollect the astonishment which marked his features as he entered the room where we sate, and turned his eyes first on us, then on the pictured walls, then on the furniture, and, lastly, on the dogs sleeping on the hearth. When his amazement allowed

him words, he exclaimed—‘What is it I see!—Am I suddenly transported into England?—Do I gaze on a venerable English squire and his family?—Do I see the portraits of his ancestors, and some other paintings, master-pieces of the Italian and Flemish masters?—I could swear it is so, and that peculiar breed of dogs strengthens my impressions.’

“My father advanced, and, shaking the English youth cordially by the hand, told him his surprise was natural. The youth was one who had travelled through many countries; and, gentlemen, however, you may wonder, it was no other than Arthur Law.

“Arthur had at that time a good property, and an inquiring mind, that led him to see much of men. My father and he soon fell into discourse, and almost as soon became strong friends. His abode with us was made as pleasant as all parties could make it; he seemed to linger willingly with us; and at length he endeavoured to persuade my father to return to England. The attempt was vain. Pride, the cause which had led him forth on his disastrous journey, forbade him as powerfully to return. Could he go back thus shattered in mind, body, and fortune, to become the finger-mark of universal scorn?—No! time went on; and fresh force was added to Arthur’s

arguments. An attachment had grown up between us; Arthur was desirous that we should live in England; Miss Raidon was anxious to return; all our servants, except the old steward, had deserted us, lured away by American freedom and American speculation: my father became discontented and disgusted with his situation. There wanted but one more motive, and that was found: Arthur represented to him that to seek successfully for his lost daughter we must return to Europe. It was enough; our departure was determined.

“In less than six months we had disposed of our estate, recrossed the ocean, and sat down in a secluded little villa not far from the metropolis. Arthur and I were married; my father and brother lived with us; Miss Raidon went to reside with her friends in the west of England. Our property had sunk wonderfully by our emigration. Arthur had money, but he was anxious to increase it on our account: he, therefore, embarked with some of his own friends in trade. During the day, he was occupied in the city, where my brother Vincent was also engaged in the study of the law. In the evening they returned together; and by our pleasant little fireside we again began to taste some degree of English happiness.

“But the only object of my father’s existence

seemed to be the discovery of his daughter. It was a scheme in which, almost hopeless, as it appeared, we could not avoid deeply sympathizing; and our interest evidently strengthened his. Innumerable inquiries were set on foot, most of which ended in nothing: some grew into shapes approaching to probability, and then were lost in inexplicable confusion; others seemed drawing nearer and nearer to important developments, and yet never arrived so far. For three years this wild and feverish pursuit was kept up. Arthur had crossed the Channel, but could make out nothing; and at length my father's strength and spirit appeared spent; he became fretful and desponding. One morning, as we sate together after breakfast, he in his tall easy chair, Vincent in the cushioned window-seat, poring over one of his law-books in his usual way, and I comparing the bowed weakness of my father with the youthful grace and fresh bloom of my brother, suddenly the old man gave a loud sigh, seized his stick which stood beside his chair, struck it sharply on the ground, and exclaimed—'I shall never see her! no! never! never!—I am old and worn out, I cannot follow her; and those askings—askings—they end in nothing. I shall never, never see her. And yet she is somewhere at this moment, the very picture of her mother. Ay,

she was always said to be just her image. And now, O God! how exactly she must be like her! O! if I had but the strength and activity I once had—land and water, land and water—what would they be to me!—I would see her! I would see her! and not all France should withstand me!’

“We were startled at this sudden outburst of agonized affection. I gazed on my father; I turned to my brother; he, too, had fixed his eyes on the old man. His book rested on his knees, and his cheek was flushed with a rosy red, that mounted up to his very forehead, as with the strength of some noble emotion. At once he rose from his seat, stood tall and erect by my father’s chair, and, in a voice which might be called calm for its steadiness, but showed itself full of the stirred spirit by its depth, he said—‘Father! if you are old, I am young; and, by heaven and earth! if my sister lives, and the power and perseverance of man can find her, you shall yet see her, and in this house!’

“I involuntarily rose as he spoke. My eyes were fixed on my father. As he looked on my brother and heard these words, his pale features grew still paler; he bent forward suddenly in his chair; his lips opened as if he would speak, but there was no voice; his hand was raised as to

second his words, but he had no words. I saw that the words he would fain have uttered would have been—‘ Bless thee, my son ! thou hast made me happy ! fly to find thy sister !’ But he could not utter them ; and, as my brother stooped towards him, he clasped his head to his bosom with a faint convulsive embrace, and wetted his dark beautiful locks with tears.

“ In less than an hour my Vincent was on his way. He was a youth well calculated to make his path easy : he was but in his twentieth year. He had all the manly beauty of the St. Barbes, and the air of generous good-nature that animated his features made a ready impression of favour on the hearts of all to whom he addressed himself. We soon began to hear from him. One after another, the stories which had excited and perplexed us were dissipated before his inquiries. After a while, nothing remained, not even the slightest trace to guide him right or wrong. Anon, he came upon something like probability. It became more so. He had fallen upon the track of a French captain, who commanded a vessel of the same name, at the very period in question. He had one daughter ; or, at least, a girl who passed by that name. She was everywhere described as a prodigy of beauty ; the professed father guarded her with the utmost vigilance. He traced them

from place to place. It soon appeared that, during the early revolutionary movements, the captain had made himself obnoxious to the democratic party, and had passed into Spain. Thither Vincent proceeded without delay. It was some time before he regained the trace of them, but, when hope almost failed him, he discovered her as the wife of a Spanish noble; the captain was dead. Every mouth was filled with the beauty, the wit, the gaiety, of Donna Morella; she resided with her husband at Madrid, and formed one of the most brilliant points of attraction in the most brilliant society of the capital. Vincent prepared to approach her; but he determined to do it with such caution as should prevent any mortifying mistake. He sedulously cultivated the acquaintance of some young hidalgoes, through whom he had the opportunity of beholding her without coming too suddenly under her eye. All his inquiries proved her to be the reputed daughter of the very man in question. He wrote us eloquent accounts of the exquisite beauty of her person, the fascination of her manners, the youthful gaiety of her disposition. He declared that he beheld in her a strong resemblance to the miniature of his mother, which he had with him, and a strong resemblance to himself; nay, a lady of her establishment had, in conversation with

Vincent, suddenly remarked, with astonishment, as he was making a merry compliment, the strong resemblance that his features then bore to those of the Donna Morella. All things seemed tending to such a crisis as we desired. Here his letter ended with the declaration that he should speedily give us, he trusted, the fullest assurance of our fondest hopes.

“A few weeks afterwards, another letter arrived; he was on his way home, and would tell us further when he came. There was a strangeness and abruptness in this announcement, which startled and alarmed us. Had he found her, or had he not? In either case why not be explicit? We waited with indescribable impatience for his arrival. Now we hoped all, now we feared all. This moment we feared he had found himself mistaken, and waited to break the disappointment in person; the next, we confidently imagined that he was hastening to burst upon us with the joyful intelligence of his long-sought sister. The old man was seized with the most decided anticipations. He was bringing her with him! he was preparing a most electrical surprise! He would have his chair placed at an upper window, so as to command the most extensive view of the road. All day, and every day, there he sate, saying, as every traveller came in view—‘Is that her? yes!

yes! it is!—No! I see it is not!’ At length a chaise drove rapidly up: it stopped at our gate, and Vincent himself, all travel-worn, stepped from it. We stood fixed as statues, our eyes rivetted on the chaise, but no one else descended. Vincent came with a hasty step into the house: the old man fixed on him a hard inquiring look. He would have said — ‘What news?’ but his voice, his powers, failed him; his eager eyes only spoke. Vincent, too, had no voice; he stood still at the entrance of the room, his gaze fixed wildly on the old man: his face was dim and ghastly, as with excess of grief or of passion; his lips quivered convulsively, his whole frame trembled, and he burst into tears. I ran and clasped him in my arms. When I looked up at my father, the spirit of the old man had passed away! For a moment, his countenance, calm and noble, recalled to my memory his look in younger days, then sunk, and exhibited all the characters of death.

“Gentlemen, this is a melancholy but most true relation: one sorrow more, and I have done. We spoke not for a time of our sister. My father was at peace with his fathers; we were left to deeper trouble. My husband’s mercantile speculations had proved disastrous; we were becoming every day poorer. Scarcely was the funeral over

when I said to Vincent—‘ You have no good news of our sister, but, for God’s sake, tell me *what* news !’ He looked at me for some time ; his face grew strangely dark. ‘ Alice,’ he replied, ‘ I have none. Let us think no more of *that woman* ! If there be no bond of kindred between us, what matters it !—If there be, she is worthless—she denies it. She ridicules the claim ; she treats it as the dream of a madman. Alice ! I have seen her ; seen much of her : she is beautiful as an angel ; but a vicious education, an education calculated to mould her into a creature of splendour, has ruined her beyond redemption. She lives but to breathe—to breathe, did I say ?—to banquet, to luxuriate, upon flattery, and the worship of a base and bewildering passion. I know not what she saw in me, unless another devotee ; but I was admitted to her most secluded conversations, and I employed them to arrive at the object of my mission. I will not say more than that I laid before her, in the most favourable moment, the whole substance of my belief in her origin, the whole evidence I had accumulated. While the very image of my sainted mother rose before me in her form, and glowed with more than all her remembered beauty, she laughed with scorn at the idea, and even breathed upon me words of Circean sorcery. I appealed to her better nature ; I held

before her the miniature of her mother, whose youthful features seemed but the mirrored image of her own ; I appealed to her memory ; but it was vain : I saw myself looked upon as a deluded fool, and I turned away with indignation and loathing. Before I awoke from my dream of wrath and disappointment, I had reached the heart of the Pyrenees. I am here, Alice, but that only for a moment. Poverty and trouble are gathering fast about us : let us cease not, however to struggle against them. For me, I will no longer add to your burdens. I will seek a better fortune in another land. Dark as were the years we passed in America, my heart turns with fondness towards its mighty forests. In that land I will seek my fate, and, till you hear of me with honour, you will hear no more !

“It was in vain that I hung round him, and implored him, as the last of our name, to abandon this scheme. He departed. For forty years I have lived a life of hope and anticipation ; yet to this day I have had no syllable from him. You will say, as all say to me, he is dead : but my heart will not believe it. We have sunk from poverty to poverty : my husband, overwhelmed with his misfortunes, seems dulled into a dreaming and premature old man. We live amid misery, destitution, and crime ; and oh, sir !

I doubt we do not entirely escape from the contaminations that surround us. But yet we hope, and hope, and within these three months we have had such news as makes us desire to live yet a little longer. We have heard from a most respectable American that there is a judge in Connecticut—a judge—Vincent St. Barbe! a man having just such an appearance as my brother would have if now alive. Many and many a letter have I sent across the great water, but no reply ever came back; yet this must be my brother. Vincent St. Barbe! and a judge! The very name! the very profession! it must be he! O! surely he will not deny his own and only sister! I have written to him; I have asked him if he does not remember our parsonage, our croft, with the old stone wall, and the thorn trees, and the ponies: if he does not remember my poor dear father and mother and their fearful voyage—and how my sister was lost? Oh! I have asked him all. Surely, surely, he will not disown us; it is not in flesh and blood to do it. And if you could but see how Arthur and I sit and wonder when we shall hear: and how I sometimes say to Arthur—‘Suppose the judge sends us fifty pounds to carry us to him?’ and then how Arthur draws himself up in scorn, and says, ‘Five hundred, more likely!’—God send that it may be Vincent after all!”

The old lady had finished her story, and, visionary as her hope appeared, I could not help feeling the contagion of it. We thanked her cordially for her relation, wished her speedy news from her brother, and took our leave. But for some weeks I never failed to look in and ask—"What news?" Her answer was a shake of the head. One day, however, she came herself in haste to find me. She threw down a letter in great agitation, which I took up and read as follows:—

"White Cedars, Connecticut, U.S., March 4, 183—.

"MADAM,

"I have read your letter with the surprise it is calculated to excite. I wish to heaven I was indeed your brother; but, unfortunately for this affinity, I am a native of this State, where my father also was born. To mitigate your disappointment, accept the enclosure of five pounds, English money.

"Your obedient servant,

"VINCENT ST. BARBE.

"P. S. Mr. Anthony Welldeckert, merchant, residing in your city, in Goswell Road, can give you every explanation and assurance on this subject."

My surprise and chagrin were equal to those of Alice. To put the matter beyond a doubt, I in-

stantly sought out this merchant, and was speedily convinced that, however amazing the coincidence, this Vincent St. Barbe was not the brother of Alice. No! Arthur must yet haunt the American captains for news; and Alice go dreaming and hoping on, till she finds her brother, if not on earth, at least in that land where all mysteries are solved and all the lost restored.

THE END.

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